CHRONICLES OF
CULTURE
LETTERS & ARTS MORALS & MANNERS

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The Conservative Humanitarian

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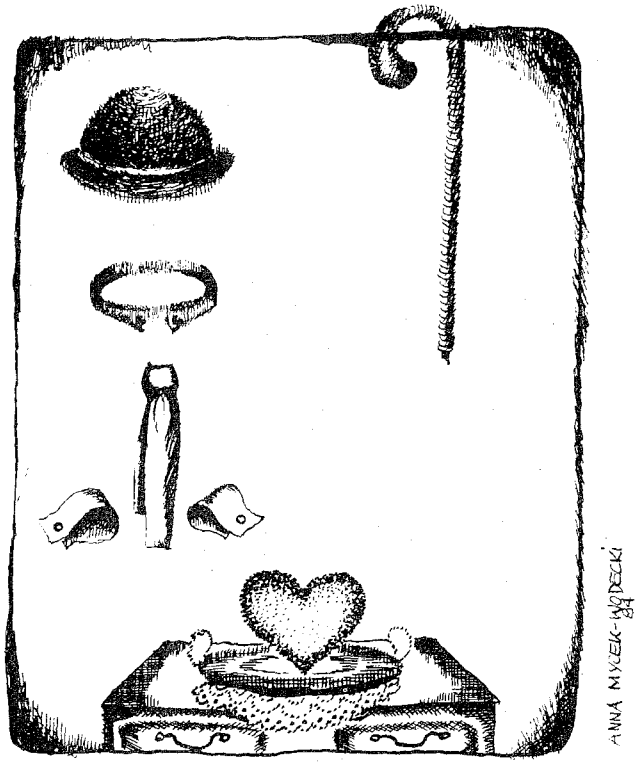
COMMENT

The contemporary ideological debate on social issues sometimes resembles a squabble between two second-graders as to which has the tougher father. Common sense and principle fall victim to pride and enthusiasm. *Conservative* and *liberal* have too often become, in modern usage, handy but meaningless epithets tossed about by single-issue demagogues for their own political convenience, thus demonstrating the present aridity of our language, by which, as Evelyn Waugh once observed, "One grows parched for that straight style of speech in the desert of modern euphemisms, where the halt and lamed are dubbed 'handicapped'; the hungry 'underprivileged'; the mad, 'emotionally disturbed.' "



Evidence of *conservative* as a stereotype is the ease with which writers, speakers, and cartoonists so effectively portray conservatives as heartless, condescending, bigoted, macho, jingoistic oafs who hide their swastikas and KKK sheets under their already overstuffed three-piece suits as they belly up to the country-club bar to protect (*manfully,* of course) the privileges of white, suburban, male jet-setters. One must admit that there is sometimes a touch of truth in these, as in all, caricatures. There are, to be sure, a few conservative writers and politicians who strongly resemble what my grandfather on the Great Plains described as a South Dakota rainstorm: lots of lightning, lots of thunder, lots of wind—and no rain. They wrap themselves in the cloak of conservatism and pontificate on social, political, and military issues with great sound and fury (which in their case signifies nothing). Their conservatism is what Russell Kirk has called the "shop-and-till" variety; they subscribe to no coherent, multidimensional ideology based upon religious, historical, philosophical, or political principles; instead their perspective is nothing more than a greasy olio of bigotry, greed, snobbery, and fear. Conservatism, like patriotism, can sometimes be the last refuge of a scoundrel.

This kind of conservative—as well as his "philosophy"—becomes an easy mark for conservatism's enemies, who are legion. With the conservative view thus discredited in the eyes of the undiscriminating, the political, social, and economic battlefields are won by the mountebanks who are quick to peddle their snake-oil utopianism of "new" ideas and "rainbow coalitions" to a gullible public, many of whom find eventually, with Edmund Burke, that it "is a general popular error to imagine the loudest complainers for the public to be the most anxious for its welfare."

Thus to many the phrase "conservative humanitarian" would seem to be an oxymoron, a self-contradictory figure of speech designed to fool the politically naive. But such is not necessarily the case. True conservatism has always believed in both the dignity and freedom of the individual and in the normative framework of civilized behavior, thus creating the fruitful tension that Burke believed "must be maintained between the claims of freedom and the claims of order."

Maintaining such a tension in the modern technological and morally aseptic world is never easy. Humanitarianism was in the 1960's and 1970's, if not before, subverted into mere political activism and the single-issue politics of the radical fringe movements which usurped what should have been the concerns of true conservatives—racial and sexual discrimination, consumer rights, ecology. But these humanitarian interests were torn away from their moral roots and became the playthings of the politicians, the lawyers, and the social scientists who could use them for what could by no stretch of the imagination be called altruistic purposes.

Thus compassion, empathy, loyalty, and integrity—the quietly heroic qualities that mark the civilized and socially sensitive man and woman—became institutionalized and politicized. In an age in which heroism is suspect, elaborate welfare systems, with their supporting bureaucracies, were built upon the miseries of the poor, the old, and the weak, in the process stifling those people they were supposed to help and condemning them to generation after generation of social and spiritual oblivion. When benevolence and social conscience become nothing more than a legal code and a political sideshow, the soul of a nation is dying.

As the superstate has arrogated the responsibility for the redistribution of wealth, the restructuring of American society, and the control of charity, the system has become

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dehumanized and wasteful, as the poor become nothing more than names on computer printouts, and as social-services budgets at all governmental levels climb faster than those for education, defense, and law enforcement.

But the blame for the present chaos cannot be placed only on the liberals, the politicians, and the social scientists, for conservatives themselves have often failed in their moral responsibility. Instead of facing the emerging problems of society and coming forward with suggestions for their amelioration, many conservatives have reacted by ignoring the realities and doing nothing, by proposing anemic and transparently self-serving solutions in order to salve their consciences, or by indulging in ad hominem arguments. And so the conservative position on a wide range of issues is made to appear impotent, uncaring, concerned only with what appears to be nit-picking about constitutional issues while the genuine needs of the nation are forgotten. Again, Burke may remind us that it is the heart, not the head, which should inform the philosophy of the conservative humanitarian: "It is not, what a lawyer tells me I *may* do; but what humanity, reason, and justice tell me I ought to do."

In contrast to the nominal, shop-and-till conservative, the conservative humanitarian believes that human nature is somehow badly flawed, that out of this imperfect spiritual and intellectual condition arise the social, political, and ethical problems that plague our world, that utopia is impossible (although there is always hope of improvement), and that human beings cannot solve their difficulties with only political solutions. The conservative humanitarian must view the present from a historical perspective, recognize and respect reality, and revere human life and dignity. Facing social complexity without oversimplification and constant change without despair, the humane conservative must, as Dryden put it in another context, "patch the flaws and buttress up the wall" of the social edifice, avoiding the temptation to "mend the parts by ruin of the whole" and to "physic their disease into a worse."

Central to the social philosophy of the conservative is a strong belief in the importance of community, a consensus among thinking people about those policies and practices that are conducive to the development, maintenance, and enhancement of a free, open, and healthy society which permits its members to enjoy their lives and property within reasonable limits. Such a community must meet directly and unequivocally the dangers facing it. But the solutions must not destroy the freedoms that nourish that community.

Conservatives must not be paralyzed by the enormity of human suffering into doing nothing, nor must they be intimidated by the power of their entrenched enemies. Instead they must work within the framework of traditions and principles to preserve the well-being of the individual and the continuity of society. They must be active in the world around them; they cannot be resigned to the status quo of agony or of indifference; they cannot be merely, to use Emerson's phrase, "conservatives after dinner." Only by vigorously combining the wisdom derived from history and tradition with a vibrant sense of community can a people develop a social philosophy that is more than what Disraeli called "an unhappy cross-breed, the mule of politics that engenders nothing."

—Robert C. Steensma

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LIBERAL CULTURE

The End Nears . . .

"The end nears when fools are hailed and the sages ignored—."

This bit of ancient wisdom came to our minds when we were going through *Time* magazine's cover story on one Shirley MacLaine, a successful actress and a quasicultural emblem of the liberal America. The gist of *Time's* text is, as usual, an extravagantly weird celebration of a quite vicious case of insipidity—and *Time's* seasoned editors know well that extolling fools in its pages makes them both thrive even more. Why do the editors do this? It is difficult to explain other than by citing their rampant cultural insouciance and irresponsibility.

The seven-page feature contains not one clear sentence about Ms. MacLaine's overt procommunist sympathies; instead, *Time,* with its liberal-journalistic perfidy, calls Ms. MacLaine a "political activist" and eagerly notes that she's worth $15 million. Indeed, it's not only easy but downright fun to be radical in today's America with such an amount of cash at hand.

Ms. MacLaine, in addition to various and sundry other pastimes and occupations, writes books. According to *Time,* one of them, *Out on a Limb,* was a best-seller: "176,000 in hard-cover and about 1.2 million in paperback." The book contains priceless nuggets of knowledge like this one: "Jesus Christ developed mystical powers during years of study among holy men in India." Such a revelation should not be too surprising, given the author, whose intellectual self-description is as follows: "Philosophically, celebrating myself is what I am into." *Time,* it seems, is into the subject of its cover story. It would be unfair, though, to blame *Time* for single-handedly creating an American darling out of a dunce: its liberal brethren in foisting idiocy upon America provide the main impetus to the cultural vector of our time that insists that common sense be silenced in the face of celebrity. This is how clowns become sages and the end nears. □

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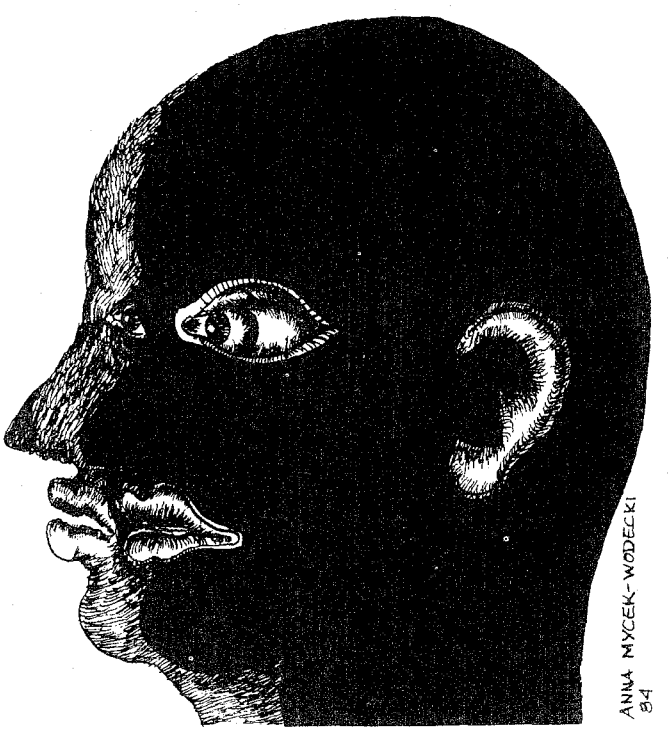
Red Hot Harlequin Romances

Alice Walker: *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens;* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; San Diego.

by Brian Murray

Alice Walker, not yet 40, has been publishing poetry and prose since the late 1960's. But only in recent years has her work been accorded the sort of fervid critical praise that the American literary establishment prefers to bestow on certifiable major American writers. For example, when Adrienne Rich read Ms. Walker's 1981 short story collection *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down,* she discovered "new kinds of characters" and "dialogue" that "have not been found in fiction before." In the same volume, Tillie Olsen watched stories "go where no others had ventured before." And Gloria Steinem detected "a personal, unmistakable voice that is universal at the same time." Praise for Walker's 1982 novel *The Color Purple* was even more widespread and effusive. *The New York Times Book Review* called it the "indelibly affecting" product of a "lavishly gifted writer." *The Nation* said it placed Ms. Walker "in the company of Faulkner." *The San Francisco Chronicle* proposed that in fact it placed her in the company of Homer, Shakespeare, and Dostoevsky, for this was a book "good enough to stand beside the literature of any time and place." Steinem again concurred. She said *The Color Purple* was "full of complicated family relationships" that "no Russian novel could beat," as well as "succinct, profound discussions about the existence of God." It was, she sighed, "irresistible to read."

To bring things to a less-ethereal level, it must be admitted that Ms. Walker's novels and short stories prove that she has an eye for interesting detail and an ear for the varied patterns of speech. More often than not, they display a prose style that is polished and graceful. But increasingly, they also display a "voice" that is far from "universal"—a voice that is perhaps best described as that of the self-righteous leftist-feminist turned sage. As Rich puts it, Walker's fictional writings now "work" as "tools" for "honing consciousness and transforming values." Therefore they "go" nowhere daring. In keeping with the conventions of propagandist feminist fiction, they invariably focus on sympathetically drawn female characters who take it for granted that most Judeo-Christian codes and bourgeois values are inimical to "personal growth." Indeed, they strongly imply that women belong to a wholly separate, infinitely superior species. In their own way, they are consequently as predictable and tedious as any Harlequin Romance.



Thus, in *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down,* one character frequently remembers her "first abortion" as "wonderful," for it had "all the marks of a supreme coming of age and a seizing of the direction of her life." After her second she mutters: "It was you or me, Kiddo, and I chose me." Another character, a "successful jazz poet," has a baby "as a gift" for her well-tamed husband, but soon becomes bored with motherhood and so sets out to refresh herself with a little extramarital sexual horseplay. At a writers' colony, she successfully seduces a nice looking, middle-aged novelist, but soon discovers that he is not much of a prize. He is inept in bed, and afflicted with pathetic delusions of grandeur that are obviously meant to be recognized as oh-so-typically male. Actually, not a single male in this volume is endowed with palpable integrity, wit, or charm. Two, in fact, are rapists. One is addicted to pornography-aided masturbation. Only the women are bright and self-possessed; only they "claim"—as the dust jacket trumpets—"every bit of space they make."

The much-hyped *The Color Purple* is

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no more "complicated." It is merely the Cinderella story retooled to accommodate a radically feminist—Walker would say "womanist"—slant. Celie, its central figure, is a poor black housewife living in rural Georgia during the 1930's who is surrounded not by ugly, invidious sisters, but by assorted "no-count" males who are utterly devoid of intelligence and sensitivity. Her stepson, for example, likes to say "the wife spose to mind," and frequently flails away at his recalcitrant spouse. The heroine is herself regularly thrashed by her husband Albert, who otherwise does little but suck on his pipe, stare into space, and deliver lines like these: "Wives is like children. You got to let 'em know who got the upper hand. Nothing can do that better than a good sound beating." In sum, these misogynous louts are so flatly drawn that, next to them, Bluto and Popeye look like Bouvard and Pécuchet.

Celie's princess charming is one Shug Avery, an itinerant blues singer who once lived with Albert, and who returns to his house to be nursed by Celie after falling ill during a performance at a nearby club. Shug wears feathered hats, tight dresses, and "sassy red shoes." She carries a snakeskin bag. She also smokes cigarettes, swigs gin, and swears like a stevedore. With her caustic wit she keeps the menfolk in line. Even the hard-boiled Albert sweats a bit when the redoubtable Shug sweeps into a room. Throughout *The Color Purple* Shug attempts to raise Celie's consciousness by reminding her that while the average man can be trained to become a halfway decent bed partner, he cannot easily cease being a cad. After all, he is part of a patriarchal system that is malign and omnipotent and bent on staying that way. "Man," explains Shug, "corrupt everything. He on your box of grits, in your head and all over the radio. He try to make you think he everywhere." In short, he is the bogeyman as well as Big Brother, and he's at the root of all social injustice and human woe.

Celie finally gives up on Albert and moves to Memphis, where—with Shug's help—she metamorphoses into an eminent designer of women's trousers. After hearing the gospel according to Shug, she gives up Christianity, too. For God, proclaims Shug, can rarely be found in church, and never in the "white folks' white bible." God, she reckons, is simply "inside you and inside everybody else." Moreover, "God ain't a he or a she, but a It." And "It" is remarkably laid back. It could care less about, say, The Seven Deadly Sins; It just wants everybody to sniff the flowers and listen to the birdies sing. It wants everybody to have a good time—with every body. As the hedonistic Shug puts it while womanhandling Celie: "You can just relax, go with everything that's going, and praise God by liking what you like." So much, then, for "succinct, profound discussions about the existence of God."

In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens, is a cumulation of 15 years worth of Ms. Walker's essays and reviews, some of which first appeared in *Ms.* and *Mother Jones*. Again, there is much here to show that Walker is a gifted handler of English prose, and an able fashioner of the autobiographical vignette. Especially affecting are her scattered recollections of what it was like to be the daughter of a black sharecropper in central Georgia at a time when "culluds" still had to move to the back of the bus and suffer the public snubs and insults of bigoted whites. Commendable, too, is Walker's account of her 1973 search through Florida for the grave of the black novelist Zora Neale Hurston—a search that ultimately took her to a rural cemetery thick with weeds, insects, and snakes. This piece is funny and touching and, unlike the cemetery, neatly plotted.

On the whole, however, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* is a trying book, for it brims with the contentious and sometimes awesomely absurd rhetoric that feminist polemicists are wont to spout. In these pages, Ms. Walker announces that "the whole notion of ladyhood is repugnant to me." She suggests that it is "downright mind straining" for "white women scholars to think of black women *as* women." She suggests too that "Nature is phasing out the white man"—and she considers it "good news."

At one point, Walker identifies as her principle nemesis an "oppressive capitalist society" which breeds "sexism and racism." But elsewhere she makes it clear that the dreaded white man is really Enemy Number One, since he continues to commit "crimes against humanity. Against women. Against every living person of color. Against the poor." White men are driven by a "lust" to "dominate, exploit, and despoil not just our planet, but the rest of the universe." Haven't they already left their "litter" on the moon? Thunders Walker: "If we have any true love for the stars, planets, the rest of creation, we must do everything we can to keep white men away from them."

Not surprisingly, Fidel Castro is one

In the Mail

Nicaragua: Christians Under Fire by Humberto Belli; The Puebla Institute; Garden City, MI. The conclusion—"Nicaraguan Christians are confronting a Marxist-Leninist regime which, in spite of its promises regarding religious and other basic human rights, is bent on securing totalitarian rule"—is strongly supported.

Softening without Liberalization in the Soviet Union: The Case of Jüri Kukk by Rein Taagepera; University Press of America; Washington, DC. Dissent may seem to be more tolerated in the Soviet Union nowadays, but death is still often the final resolution.

The Redemption of Matter: Toward the Rapprochement of Science and Religion by James W. Jones; University Press of America; Washington, DC. Of quantum mechanics and the Holy Ghost.

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white guy Ms. Walker does approve of. Remember, he sent the "greedy and anti-sharing" packing, and he has been building "a just society" ever since. Ms. Walker reports in a 1977 essay on Cuba that, thanks to Uncle Fidel, today there is "work for everyone in Cuba. Everyone has enough to eat. . . . Illiteracy has virtually disappeared." And thanks to him, even male chauvinism is on the wane. For as Walker approvingly notes, there is in Cuba something called a "Family Code" which "contains the laws that regulate family life." Among other things, the code—which Walker quotes in full—stipulates that women have an equal right to practice a " 'profession or skill' " and demands that " 'spouses must live together, be loyal, considerate, respectful and mutually loyal to each other.' " In other words, it says to males: Be nice to your women—or else.

Of course, Fidel Castro is himself no Phil Donahue. He originally bought grenades and bazookas for his guerrillas by extorting money from Cuban businessmen, farmers, and mill owners. Once in power, he silenced his more articulate opponents by pushing them into prison—or eternity. Eventually, he muzzled the press, broke the trade unions, shut down the churches, and set up a network of internal spies. Today he functions as a Soviet stooge in an effort to ensure that the boys in the Kremlin will do what it takes to keep Cuba's moribund economy afloat. But over such matters Ms. Walker would rather not quibble. She concedes that some hardship and persecution still exist in Cuba (the "government-sanctioned dislike of homosexuals" bothers her most), but she points out that revolution is—as Fidel so uniquely put it—" 'a process.' " It takes "years and years and generations" to complete, she explains. Besides, "Standing in line for hours to receive one's daily bread cannot be so outrageous," she suggests, "if it means that every person *will receive bread,* and no one will go to bed hungry at night."

In an afterword to one of the stories contained in *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down,* Ms. Walker admits "I *am* sometimes naive and sentimental." On this point at least, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* does much to prove her right. Naiveté and sentimentality are not the stuff of serious writers, unless such writers know how to convert them into credible components of a literary probing into fundamental notions: truth, emotion, moral value. Naiveté and sentimentality (especially when they are undergirded by the kind of rabidity of mind and heart which seem to be a staple of Ms. Walker's output) may serve as the stuffing of the romance novels perennially produced by hacks and trendists—using Ms. Walker's own knack for forming neologisms. As such they become a sign of cheapness and paltriness—which makes them an easy merchandise to be pushed by Manhattan and Hollywood operators of shoddy "ideological" commodities in arts, literature, and academia. □

Accidents & Ignorance

A. J. P. Taylor: *A Personal History;* Atheneum; New York.

by Samuel T. Francis

With the exception of Edward Gibbon, there have been few great historians who have written their autobiographies. The reason for this should be fairly clear. While some historians, such as Macaulay or Mommsen, led interesting lives, and some, such as Lewis Namier, are interesting men, most serious historians do nothing that is of any historical significance in itself. After a lifetime of interpreting the failures and achievements of more important figures, they acquire the humility or the good sense not to delude themselves on their own importance and therefore do not intrude the trivia of their personal histories upon their readers.

A. J. P. Taylor, one of the most prolific writers of history in the English-speaking world, is also an exception, although this is all he shares with Gibbon. Taylor is not a great historian or even a very significant one. Most of his works have been either textbooks *(The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918* or *English History, 1914-1945)* or popularized accounts of 19th and 20th-century history. Only *The Origins of the Second World War* broke new ground, and it was based on printed sources, not archival materials. Unlike R. H. Tawney and Lewis Namier, Taylor devised no new methodologies of research or inquiry. Unlike Marc Bloch or the *Annales* school, he applied no new social science disciplines or ideologies to history. (It is just as well that he did not, since such applications have usually contributed more distortions and omissions than they have corrected.) Insofar as Taylor enjoys a professional reputation, it is that of an honest researcher and narrator who knows his sources and who honestly reports and analyzes them. He has, then, simply the reputation of a competent historian.

A Personal History is without any illumination of the great questions that attend the study of history or the nature of the historical process; indeed, there is little reason to suppose that Taylor has ever seriously grappled with these questions. His own view of history, for which he has been for some years notorious, is "that most things in history happen by accident" and "I merely find the writing and reading of history entertaining. I have never discovered any message in the writing of history other than . . . 'Always verify your references.' " The view of history as a chapter of accidents or, in Aldous Huxley's phrase, "one damn thing after another," is not uncommon among 20th-century British histo-

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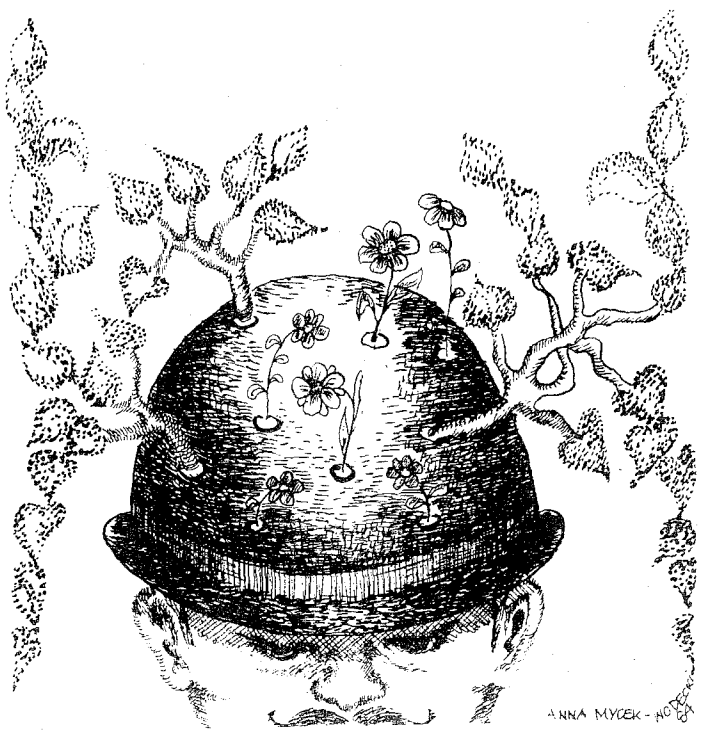
rians—H.A.L. Fisher and Alan Bullock also espoused it. Its logical implication is that there is no meaning in history and no purpose in studying it. There is neither progress nor decline, neither a pattern of lessons nor a tradition of conduct, and human thought and action have no significant consequences. "Entertainment" is the only intelligible justification for studying history so conceived, although most normal people would probably prefer watching television to wading through monographs based on this concept, and why anyone would find history as the story of accidents more entertaining than monkeys in a cage is beyond my comprehension. Certainly there is no reason to coerce taxpayers to support Dr. Taylor and his colleagues in their solipsistic notion of fun. If entertainment is the criterion of good history, why shouldn't historians simply fake references or fabricate the narrative altogether? That would be even more amusing.



Not only does Taylor maintain that nothing can be learned from history, but he also says nothing about why he became an historian. Born in 1906 into a well-off middle-class Lancashire family of Dissenting businessmen, Taylor absorbed their liberal and socialist opinions without reflection. As a boy, he claims, he one day heard a voice saying, "There is no God," and he has been an atheist ever since. So much for philosophical inquiry. He chose to read history at Oxford because his school usually prepared boys to read science at Cambridge, and Taylor wanted to be different. He continued the study of history after taking his degree because he had nothing else to do and it afforded him the opportunity to live in Vienna for a while. By his own admission, most of the books he has written were offered to him by accident, and there were few that he undertook because he believed the subject was important. After a few years of living the academic life, acquiring contacts with serious scholars like Namier and G.N. Clark, and contributing to newspapers and the BBC, Taylor became a fixture in the British intellectual establishment. It is easy to confuse a fixture with the real thing.

In his youth Taylor was a member of the Communist Party, but he gave it up because he could not muster belief in its discipline, ideology, and program. He came to dislike most British communists, but he continued to defend the Soviet Union. He also gave up his youthful socialism except as "a vague emotion" and, later, because he was disappointed that the Attlee government was too conservative. Probably Taylor is incapable of accepting any disciplined body of thought, whether theological or political, and he became an affable nihilist. He often mentions his commitment to the notion of sexual equality and goes on ad nauseam about his love affairs. Perhaps his belief in the equality of the sexes has something to do with the fact that he has been married three times, that his first wife publicly and shamelessly cheated on him, and that his second wife forbade him to mention her name in his book. Or perhaps it is just an accident, like everything else.

Despite his apparent nihilism, Taylor continued his activism for leftish causes, mainly the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). The most officious parts of *A Personal History* are those in which Taylor inflicts his political opinions upon the reader. If he were an aging Labour Party guru, these would be tolerable, because no one expects historical sophistication from political figures. But because Taylor is an eminent academic and historian of the 19th and 20th centuries, he has no excuse for his banalities. Listen, then, to the accumulated wisdom of 75 years of historical erudition:

On Soviet Russia: "Soviet Russia had made a great impression on me which lasted a long time. All the people we met—school teachers, hospital workers, men and women in factories—still seemed full of revolutionary enthusiasm. The measure of enlightenment and emancipation that people talked about in the west were here being put into

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practice. I am afraid I never thought about economic policy which no one discussed. If there was dictatorship and a secret police, no one noticed them."

On Appeasement and Rearmament: "How could we advocate armaments that were likely to be used against Soviet Russia? I answered by propounding a Soviet alliance as the test of anti-Nazi sincerity. . . . I had a further motive which I think few others shared. Knowing eastern Europe . . . I believed that Communist victories there would be an improvement on the existing regimes as in my opinion they have proved to be."

On America as an Ally: "The predominant feeling among English people was that the Americans should have entered the war long before. There was little of the gratitude towards America that Churchill and others told us we ought to feel. What had we to be grateful for? It was the Americans who should have been grateful to us."

On the Satellites and the Cold War: "Soviet ascendancy of eastern Europe had no perils for me. Certainly I hoped that the East European states would gradually acquire greater independence, as had happened with Yugoslavia to my great joy and might well have happened elsewhere if it had not been for the Cold War. . . . If the United States could claim a say in the Far East, why could Russia not claim a say in, for example, Africa?"

On the Hungarian Revolution: "Better a Communist regime supported by Soviet Russia, I thought, than an anti-Communist regime led by Cardinal Mindszenty. Hence my conscience was not troubled by the Soviet intervention. Everything I have seen in Hungary since then confirms my belief that I was right." (In the 1920's, when Taylor was studying Austro-Italian diplomacy in the 19th century, he refused to visit the Italian archives while Mussolini was in power. His scruples did not forbid him to visit Yugoslavia and Hungary in the 1950's.)

On Proposed British Intervention at Suez: "Michael Foot and I believed that the British government was committing a crime comparable to Hitler's invasion of Poland."

On Disarmament: "Our programme [in the CND] was simple and we never wavered from it: unilateral disarmament first for our own country and then for everyone else."

This is only a sample of the fatuous opinions to which Taylor was and remains dedicated. It does little to inspire his readers with the notion that they learn anything from history, but it does corroborate the adage that the only thing worse than a young fool is an old one. Nevertheless, A. J. P. Taylor is an interesting specimen of a certain breed that, to our woe, is by no means extinct. His is the leftism, not of the flaming rebel, but of the parlor pinks of the academic establishment: narrow-minded, highly opinionated, blissfully unaware of alternative bodies of thought and opinion, ignorant of and uncommitted to the assumptions and implications of his beliefs, sentimental, sanctimonious, and patronizing toward those who do not share his tastes and superstitions—in short, a liberal bigot. It is a type whose cultural power in universities and the mass media has been a principal cause of Anglo-American self-destruction.

Taylor is blessedly silent on the virtues of socialism, I suspect because its costs have become so obvious even to him that he cannot bring himself to defend it. He does state near the end of his book, for once correctly, that "Civilization can survive wars and slumps. Inflation destroys the foundations of society." Could there possibly be any connection between inflation and the socialism Taylor has supported as "a vague emotion" all his life? Probably not. Probably this, like everything else, is just an accident. □

Finer Feet of Clay

Bernard Malamud: *The Stories of Bernard Malamud;* Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York.

Isaac Bashevis Singer: *The Penitent;* Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York.

by Will Morrisey

Morality is religion's province. Contemporary secularists do not see this, averting their eyes from the religious sources of their own moralities. Such aversion makes a kind of sense; deprived of any metaphysical foundation, secular morality can only rest on a physical one, and modern physics, chemistry, and biology are morally unpromising. Looked at hard, modern secular moralities dissolve into more or less appealing immoralisms, though many people prefer not to notice. Even ancient philosophers, celebrated or condemned for their teleology, never quite offered rigorous proofs that nature issues directly in morality. Custom and opinion, compacted largely of accident and artifice, seem to contribute more.

Moral commandments animate Judaism. Hebrew has no word for "nature." Judaism rejects accident for Providence and abhors the art that produces graven images. Today's Jews confront men animated by modern science, the art of using nature to conquer nature, a human providence. The non-Jews Jews confront are therefore more profoundly unJewish than any other non-Jews in history. Bernard Malamud and Isaac Bashevis Singer write very differently, but each responds to the confrontation of Jews with modern non-Jews by upholding the Jewish tradition of moral seriousness.

Malamud has collected 25 of his short stories, all but two of which appeared in previous books. In his preface Malamud

Mr. Morrisey is author of Reflections on DeGaulle *(University Press of America).*

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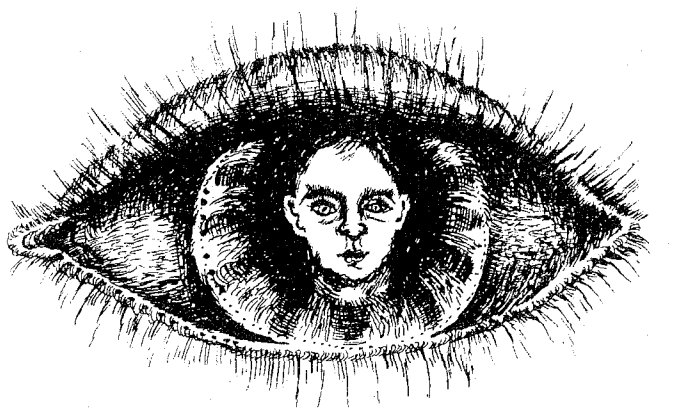
writes that literature "values man by describing him"—a remark that smoothly mediates between literary realism and concern for morality. The men and women described here inhabit life's margins. Retired, poor, grieving, they "suffer from [their] health," as one of them puts it, a phrase that makes "health" synonymous with being sick. Their vulnerability allows Malamud to illustrate the moral themes that fascinate him: charity, guilt, love, and faith.

In "The Bill," a married couple who own a store extend credit to a neighbor because "if you were a human being you gave credit to somebody else and he gave credit to you." But the man who gets the credit resents them for it, feels guilty, and never pays his debt. The protagonist of "Black Is My Favorite Color" tries to extend charity and love to blacks, who reject it or fail to return it. "[T]he language of the heart is either a dead language or else no one understands it the way you speak it," he laments. Nor are non-Jews the only proud ingrates, Jews faultlessly charitable. "The Jewbird" is a parable about Jewish resentment of victimized Jews; in "Man in the Drawer" an American Jewish writer resents the gift of a manuscript from a desperate Jewish colleague in the Soviet Union.

The relation between giver and recipient obtains in the relation between an artist and those who care for art or believe they care. "Rembrandt's Hat," one of Malamud's best stories, features an art historian who thinks of a sculptor, "All I have is good will toward him." Just so—but good will is not enough. After unintentionally offending the sculptor by comparing the artist's hat to one in a Rembrandt self-portrait, the historian feels "surges of hatred." Months of feuding pass before the historian takes another look at the Rembrandt painting.

> In his self-created mirror [as distinguished from mirrors held up by historians and critics] the painter beheld distance, objectivity painted to stare out of his right eye; but the left looked out of bedrock, beyond quality. Yet the expression of each of the portraits seemed magisterially sad; or was this what life was if when Rembrandt painted he did not paint the sadness?



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The historian also notices a simple fact: he had misremembered Rembrandt's hat, which does not closely resemble the hat the sculptor wears. Those who would partake of what artists give us must learn empathy, not only judgment; without empathy attention fails, causing inaccurate perceptions and false judgments. The historian reconciles with the sculptor, who wears his hat "like a crown of failure and hope"—failure, because he is no Rembrandt, hope for achieving something fine.

"Art celebrates life and gives us our measure," Malamud writes. The celebration is no more direct in his stories than in Rembrandt's paintings. Guilt can literally bring death, as in "The Jewish Refugee," the story of a German-Jewish critic and journalist who believes that his German wife, left behind, was secretly anti-Semitic. He commits suicide after learning that she had converted to Judaism and was murdered by the nazis. But Malamud does not join with Nietzsche and his epigones in celebrating life without guilt. "The Death of Me" shows non-Jews who quarrel and who come to hate each other bringing death to a Jew. "Life Is Better Than Death" ironically portrays a young widow whose affair ends in pregnancy and desertion. Malamud's most revealing title plays on a stock expression, "The Cost of Living." By describing the slow impoverishment and bankruptcy of an old-fashioned grocer, Malamud insists on life's physical and spiritual costliness.

Only a few of his people see what makes life worth its cost: fidelity, that combination of faith and love. "The First Seven Years" depicts the reciprocal fidelity of a man and a woman by echoing the story of Jacob and Rachel. Fidelity between human beings mirrors the even more difficult fidelity between a human being and God. The theme of giving and receiving is here, too, as God gives life and the moral standards governing it, forcing men to choose between gratitude and resentment.

Malamud sees both the humor and the seriousness in this. "Talking Horse" concerns Abramowitz, a circus performer who doesn't know if he's a talking horse or a man trapped inside the horse, and his owner, Goldberg, who "doesn't like interference with his thoughts or plans, or the way he lives, and no surprises except those he invents." "The true pain," Abramowitz says, "is when you don't know what you have to know." He comes to suspect that "Goldberg is

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afraid of questions because a question could show he's afraid people will find out who he is": "Somebody who all he does is repeat his fate." The exceedingly human Abramowitz demands his freedom and gets it. He struggles part of the way out of his horse-body and becomes "a free centaur," neither beast nor Goldberg.

One of the few characters whose profession Malamud declines to tell us is Mendel, the loving father of an idiot son. Dying, Mendel wants to get his son on a train to California, where he can live with a relative. Ginzburg the ticket collector blocks them; his gaze terrifies Mendel, who dares to struggle for his son.

> Ginzburg, staring at himself in Mendel's eyes, saw mirrored in them the extent of his own awful wrath. He beheld a shimmering, starry blinding light that produced darkness.
>
> Ginzburg looked astounded. "Who, me?"

God recognizes His own cruelty because he can see it reflected in the eyes of a human being, His most notable creation. Only then He shows mercy, lets the son be saved.

Salvation and freedom obsess Singer's protagonist as well. But whereas Malamud's stories express opinions indirectly, requiring interpretation, Singer allows his protagonist to speak almost directly for Singer. The opinions expressed contradict, even denigrate, the opinions of the dominant "culture" of our time. This may account for the book's unusual publishing history.

The Penitent appeared in serial form in 1973, then as a book one year later. Farrar, Straus & Giroux published it in English in 1983, surely an unusual delay in view of the author's prestige. According to the dust jacket copy, although "the novel was immediately recognized by its readers as one of Singer's most serious, and perhaps finest, works," some critics "predicted it would never be translated" "because of its inwardness." "Inwardness?" No: Jewishness was the real offense—and not the Jewishness that accommodates itself to the world and meets with toleration from all but the worst anti-Semites. Singer presents us with a Jew who speaks for the Judaism that spurns the ways of this world, and he insists that we listen to this Jew respectfully. Singer is right to insist. With his protagonist, Joseph Shapiro, he shows a contemporary man reconstructing lost faith in God.

Shapiro briefly recalls his early life as a young "progressive" from a Polish rabbinical family. After surviving World War II, he married, came to America, and made his fortune in real estate. "When a person makes a good deal of money but lacks faith, he begins to concern himself with one thing: how to squeeze in all the pleasure possible." Adultery follows, of course; "the loose female has become the deity of America." In an indirect way, so does tolerance of the violent crimes of those who want quick gratification: "In America, as in Sodom, the perpetrator went free and the witness rotted in jail. And all this was done in the name of liberalism. . . . Everyone knows this, but try talking about it and you're called the worst names." His life eventually caused Shapiro to suffer spiritual and physical nausea. His nausea is not to be confused with that described by Sartre (which was essentially borrowed from Nietzsche), for it leads him to the opposite conclusion:

> all modern philosophy has a single theme: we don't know anything and cannot know anything . . . . But to what did this lead? Their ethics weren't worth a fig and committed no one to anything. You could be versed in all their philosophies and still be a Nazi or a member of the KGB.

The likes of Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty could object to this, but

In the forthcoming issue of *Chronicles of Culture:*

The Media and Meaning

"What this history conclusively demonstrates is that the *New York Times* has routinely encouraged reporting of the news that supports its political orthodoxy. This orthodoxy includes: an accommodationist spirit with the Soviet Union, a resistance to the deployment of American troops abroad for any reason, an unreasoning hatred of Nixon Republicanism, a desire for retribution against any anticommunist hardliners, and an insouciant belief that any self-proclaimed revolutionary represents the indigenous 'will of the people.' Braley doesn't say this; he doesn't have to. The evidence speaks compellingly and the conclusion is unavoidable. The *New York Times* does not report 'all the news that's fit to print'; it reports all the news that's print to fit."

—from "The Media as Fun-House Mirror"
by Herbert I. London

ALSO

Opinions & Views—Commendables—Waste of Money—In Focus
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Notables—Screen—A Prudent Progressive—Liberal Culture

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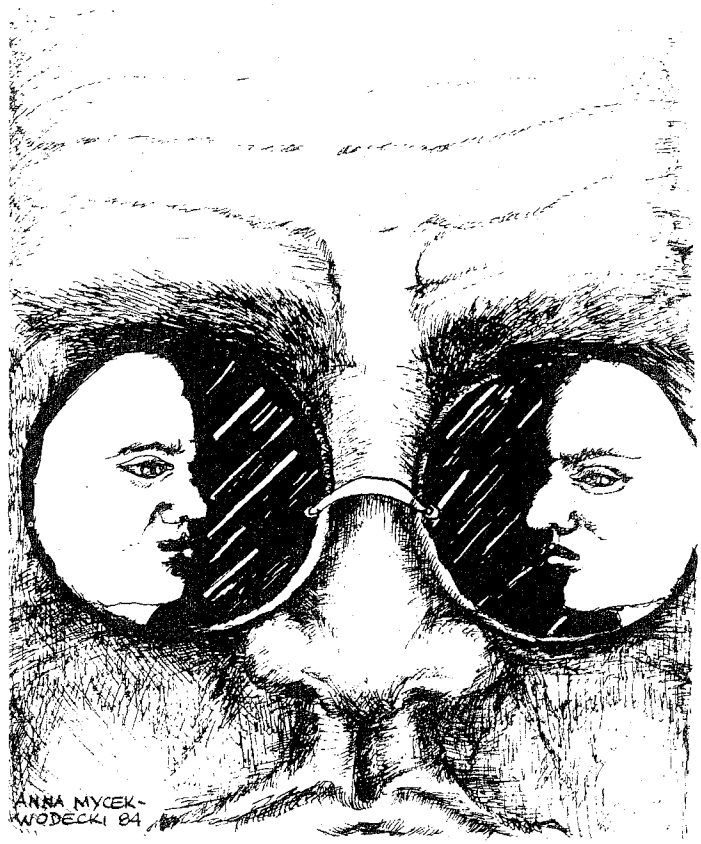
Shapiro left wife, mistress, and business, and flew to Israel: "The Jew in me suddenly gained the courage to spit at all the idolatries." He saw many of the same idolatries in Israel. Looking at books and posters in Tel Aviv, he thought: "Yes, the Enlightened have attained their goals. We [Jews] are a people like all other peoples. We feed ourselves the same dung as they do." Communism offers no better "culture" than capitalism does, and it adds tyranny. At a leftist kibbutz portraits of Lenin and the anti-Semite Stalin hung in the "Culture House."

Shapiro contrasts modern "culture" with the learning attained in a Hasidic study house in Jerusalem. He goes so far as to charge that "All the heroes in worldly literature have been whoremongers and evildoers," citing Anna Karenina, Raskolnikov, and Taras Bulba. "Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey,* Dante's *Divine Comedy,* Goethe's *Faust,* right down to the trash aimed at pleasing the street louts and wenches, are full of cruelty and abandon." To those who would reply that the Old Testament contains its share of vice, Shapiro agrees: "The Scriptures were a great beginning, an enormous foundation, but the Jews of the Scriptures were, with few exceptions, still half Gentiles." The Talmud contains more refined spirituality: "The Jew has attained his highest degree of spirituality only in the time of the Diaspora," and today's genuinely religious Jews are "Jewry's greatest achievement."

Shapiro sets his way of life against that of a young woman he met on the plane to Israel. Priscilla, "ashamed of [her] Jewishness since childhood," engaged to be married to another secularized Jew, quickly seduces Shapiro. They meet again after several months in Israel. The last two chapters consist of a dialogue between them. Priscilla argues for atheism. As with all such arguments, hers logically justifies no more than agnosticism. Shapiro replys that morality requires choice, and that her choices imply humanism, which "doesn't serve one idol but many idols," all of them eventually destructive of the very pleasures they promise. Even if the Jewish God is an idol, the morality He commands brings no destruction. Morality leads to faith, not the other way around.



In the "Author's Note," written for this edition, Singer "cannot agree with [Shapiro] that there is a final escape from the human dilemma" because "a total solution would void the greatest gift that God bestowed upon mankind—freedom of choice." But Shapiro never claims that his solution is total, that he has escaped from the *human* dilemma, as distinguished from the modern one. He explicitly insists on the Evil Spirit's power and doggedness. A more telling criticism begins with noticing that morality finds support in non-Jewish religious practices also. If the quest for moral strength leads us to more than one path, we are not by any means "back where we started" but we are given pause.

There is also a practical difficulty. Shapiro's highly spiritualized Judaism rejects the political and military aspects of Judaism seen in ancient and modern Israel. He praises the Diaspora because it removed Jews from the responsibilities and temptations of rulership; he says that "when it suits the Evil Spirit, he can become a fervent Zionist, a burning patriot." Thus Shapiro speaks in the accents of martyrdom. Pacifist Judaism resembles pacifist Christianity. Here Singer's charge of escapism would hit with force. Shapiro could reply, with other pacifists, that "God will fight for us," if not in this world then in the next world, or in this world on the day of the Messiah. Paradoxically, this faith that begins with practice, with morality not

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theory, ends by dismissing the practical.

Singer concludes: The agonies and the disenchantment of Joseph Shapiro may to a degree stir a self-evaluation in both believers and skeptics. The remedies that he recommends may not heal everybody's wounds, but the nature of the sickness will, I hope, be recognized. Throughout their careers, Singer and Malamud have served as careful diagnosticians, not merely as makers of refined entertainments. □

Little Brother & Kid Sister

Caroline Bird: *The Good Years: Your Life in the Twenty-First Century;* E. P. Dutton; New York.

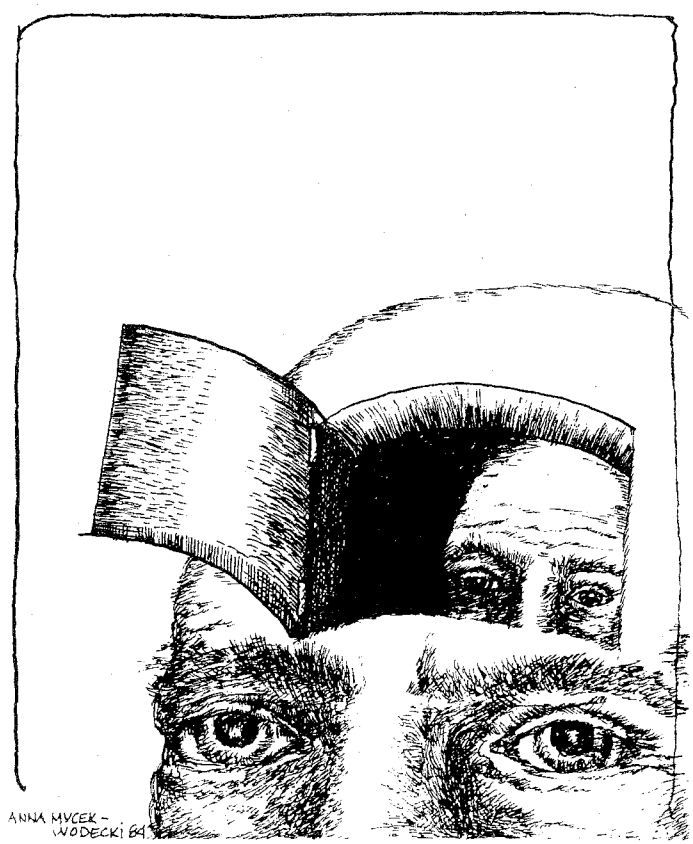
Richard Louv: *America II;* Jeremy Tarcher/Houghton Mifflin; Los Angeles.

by Edward J. Lynch

There are some serious people in the United States today attempting to ensure that the next generation of Americans has a decent place to live. Unfortunately, none of their work is recounted in either of the volumes reviewed here. Instead, these books are a product of the cottage industry within the publications establishment that projects "developing trends" into a vaporous future, assuming that everything will continue in some "inevitable" direction. Successful practitioners of such forecasting have the good sense to grab onto some obvious trends (e.g., greater use of computers) and some primitive human instincts (most obviously, the desire for survival). Combine them, and presto! We arrive at the prediction that, in the future, we are going to have security forces that rely upon video screens and computer controls rather than the beat patrolman of yesteryear. Both Mr. Louv and Mrs. Bird are companions in the effort to expand such basic observations into book-length impressions that they see more into the future than most of the rest of us.

The depth of their insight is reflected most accurately in the character of the questions that these people never ask; they manage to miss some of the most basic questions that have always troubled human beings. Although violence has been a factor in life since Cain slew Abel, both of these authors tend to wish it away. Mrs. Bird apparently assumes that, as our society "matures" (i.e., as the median age rises and we have more old people and fewer young ones), the crimes of passion and violence that we customarily associate with youth will decrease in due proportion. She never really confronts the problem, just permits it to disappear over time.

Mr. Louv, on the other hand, recognizes that an element of violence will continue in society, but believes that its consequences will be managed better as we move to condominiums equipped with exotic security arrangements, the better to observe untoward incidents in a systematic manner and either prevent the execution of crimes or apprehend the criminals more swiftly than present arrangements permit. What Mr. Louv views with obvious distaste, however, is that these increased security arrangements are being facilitated through forms of institutions which he lumps under the oxymoron "private governments." This term is intended to encompass the private security guards, con-



Dr. Lynch is currently with the National Council on Educational Research.

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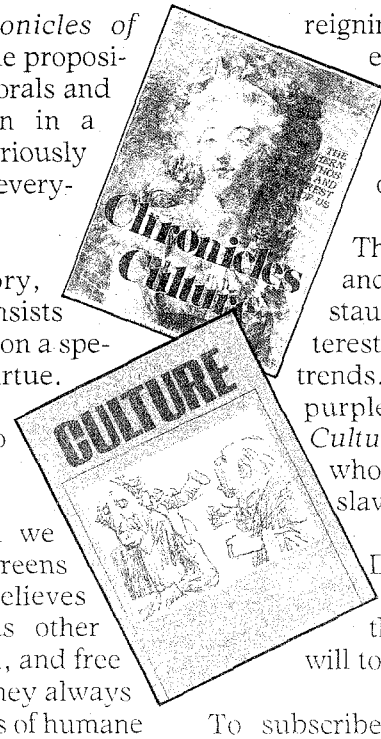

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dominium associations, neighborhood groups, and other voluntary associations that band together to establish neighborhood standards when the local constabulary cannot perform its functions. Mr. Louv is uneasy about the tensions that exist between private security forces and the state; private forces, after all, operate with less training than the police and with less supervision by our courts. Moreover, these private security arrangements are available only to those who can afford to live in arrangements apart from the poorer elements of the community. The idea that more established members of the community might have good reason to fear some of the poorer elements in our society is the kind of phenomenon that Mr. Louv treats as a result of insufficient familiarity with folks who, in most significant respects, are very much "like us" except that they cannot afford the increased "isolation" (others tend to call it "security") that wealth can provide. Mr. Louv appears to believe that wealthy members of American society actually *enjoy* paying huge sums for sophisticated security devices. He views the development of "private governments" as a threat to future social homogeneity, and thus misses the most critical element of this trend: people are fearful enough to employ "private governments" only because they have experienced the consequences of the failures of the governments that they elected.

The indifference that both books demonstrate toward criminal violence within our society extends into the international arena. The authors ignore international affairs, although they do pause to note that some nasty American entrepreneurs are "exporting" labor-intensive jobs to other societies, where labor is something less than union-scale expensive. The idea that this world might be populated by nations hostile toward the vision of a peaceful future that these two project or, on a deeper level, that other nations might be animated by religious or other impulses to impose some other way of life upon us, does not surface in either volume. The idea of conflict, or even competition in serious ways, appears not to have troubled these authors in either their foreign or their domestic observations.

The absence of conflict and competition in the books indicates that the authors predicate their expectations about the future on a very diminished conception of the people who will live in those societies. *The Federalist,* in contrast, is a treatise on the contributions that ambition, conflict, and contention can make to human progress. Different people in a free society will see opportunities for better ways of life in different channels. Given that ambition cannot be eliminated from human nature, it is permitted to express itself in various ways—though under limited controls—in the hope that the ambitions will serve the interests of the whole polity. Virtually every serious thinker, from Aristotle through Hobbes through Adam Smith to even as mild a man as George Gilder, has recognized that ambition—a desire to make tomorrow somehow better than today—is essential to any meaningful human progress. People grow only when they are challenged.

Richard Louv recognizes that something will be lost if future generations of Americans congregate in segmented enclaves, each one suspicious of the intentions of surrounding elements of the community. The idea of "one nation" cannot sustain itself for long unless there is some common core which is the focus of enculturation. For Louv, "America II" is our current "transitional period" between an older and fading industrial age and some vague future "road" where we find "destinations, which are not so *much out there as they are within* ourselves, [where] we could find our place and touch each other." Such vapid communitarianism is simply oblivious to the fact that when some people touch others they use fists.

Caroline Bird, in contrast, is writing for the geriatric set. The people who inhabit her vision of the next century are cruising into comfortable retirements. Everyone works shorter hours, doing the things that they like to do, and life never inconveniences anyone. Mrs. Bird's future is a world that is squeaky clean, an environmentalist's dream, with no contact with the grubby problems that arise whenever someone attempts to implement such visions. Mrs. Bird can wax enthusiastic about the potential of a world in which we get our power from garbage without ever considering that somebody would have to confront the basic work of operating an incinerator. Mrs. Bird's book is a rambling reflection of the world that she envisions: a world where everyone writes books despite having nothing to say. She fails to address the most significant questions that serious books about the future must ultimately encounter: Where will she find people of such limited character that they would want to live in such a diminished world? □

Notables

Building

It's always with pleasure that we come upon a volume by Saul Bellow, for he is a writer with talent and, more importantly, vision, a man who can meld the quotidian and the profound into a unified, intellectually compelling narrative. With the case of *Him With His Foot in His Mouth and Other Stories* (Harper & Row; New York), that pleasure is not unalloyed. As a doyen of American literature, Bellow, we should think, would engage prodigious effort on behalf of what is becoming the increasingly ramshackle House of Letters, would, through his writing, work toward shoring up the foundation of the late-20th-century American postmodern addition. Or, to state it more plainly, that he would write a novel. Instead, Bellow has produced a collection of five stories, four of which, essentially, are merely recycled from the pages of periodicals. This is not to say that they are not well-turned pieces, for they are clearly crafted, but they are *pieces* when we need walls. □

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Basking in the Afterglow

Richard Mayne: *Postwar: The Dawn of Today's Europe;* Schocken Books; New York.

by Stephen J. Sniegoski

It is common today to describe Western Europe as facing a crisis. Its physical problems are manifold: economic stagnation, high unemployment, political dissatisfaction, demographic decline, military flaccidity. It would appear, however, that these overt problems are surface manifestations of a deeper malaise—the loss of confidence in the existing governmental and institutional structures that have been the basis of postwar Europe. It is the origins of this postwar Europe (1945-1957) that Richard Mayne examines. Mayne, who was an active participant in crucial parts of this history as a senior official of the European Economic Community, does not present a detailed history of Europe during this period, but rather focuses on those efforts crucial in the forging of a new Western European order. Mayne's emphasis is on the remarkable success postwar Europe had in rising out of the ashes of war and establishing a prosperous and humane social order. He says in summation: "The men and women of postwar Europe had saved themselves by their exertions. Their example, like their achievement, still stands."

It would seem that an implicit purpose of the work is to counter the present European malaise. Europeans have built something worthwhile—though, of course, it can be improved—and they should be proud of it and be willing to defend it. Mayne's message is similar to that of the late Raymond Aron, presented most explicitly in Aron's noteworthy *In Defense of Decadent Europe.* Compared to the intellectually sophisticated Aron, however, Mayne's analysis borders on the superficial. It fails to probe beneath the surface events of the postwar success story to find the contradictions there. For despite its outward, dazzling success, postwar Europe from its very beginnings lacked a secure foundation and carried within it the seeds of today's current malaise.

Dr. Sniegoski is a historian who works for the Federal government.

The miraculous nature of Europe's postwar achievement certainly merits being retold. Immediately following World War II, many commentators feared that Western Europe would never rise again. Western Europe existed as a beleaguered outpost in a

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continent half of which had been absorbed into the Soviet empire, which threatened to swallow it as well. The war had been devastating, affecting civilians as had no previous European conflict. Western Europe's economy was in shambles; its politics dislocated; its people physically and mentally exhausted. Yet, not only did Western Europe manage to survive, but in many significant respects it rose to heights never before achieved. In terms of material well-being, Western Europe went on to a period of prosperity, evenly distributed throughout society, unprecedented in its history. Even after recouping wartime losses, Western Europe continued to experience such phenomenal economic growth that the standard of living gap with the historically wealthier U.S. was greatly reduced (by the 1970's relative parity had been achieved). Not only was affluence attained, but Western Europe was able to construct a system of democracy and personal liberty far surpassing anything it previously enjoyed. In terms of welfare for the individual, Western Europe had entered a veritable golden age.

Mayne presents his story with a moderate left, "Cold War" liberal slant. For example, he makes much of an argument that the "war crimes" trials purged Europe of evil, thus setting the stage for the continent's moral and physical revival. He seems unaware that in many countries the purging of "war criminals" and collaborators represented personal vendettas—or an effort by communists and radical leftists to eliminate influential political conservatives. Moreover, Mayne is unable to see as inconsistent the fact that the Soviet communists, who had committed as many crimes as the nazi Germans, were often doing the judging. And it might be added that many American and British leaders were also guilty of "war crimes," if judged by the same standards as applied to German military leaders. This is not to absolve the Germans from their many heinous crimes, but the whole "war crimes" trials issue must be viewed as far more morally complex than an instance of simple justice—the punishment of evil by the virtuous.

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Mayne's liberal slant is also apparent in his analysis of the cause of Western Europe's brilliant postwar economic achievement. He attributes this success to government planning and welfare policies, vividly contrasting the economic stagnation of the allegedly laissez-faire interwar economies with the prosperity of the postwar planned welfare states. This comparison, however, is specious since the interwar European economies were far from free. The cartelized economies of nazi Germany and fascist Italy were far more restrictive than their postwar counterparts. And though not as extreme, other European countries during the interwar period were permeated with various impediments to economic freedom, protectionist trade barriers, in particular. In reality, the cause of the postwar prosperity may not have been greater government planning but freer economic markets. As Mancur Olson points out in *The Rise and Decline of Nations,* wars (and he includes World War II) inevitably enhance economic freedom by breaking down the numerous special interest groups and combinations that have accumulated during the prior period of peace and stability. As these inpediments have once again accumulated, so has Western Europe's economic growth ceased.

The so-far unanswered question is the relationship between the current European malaise and its dazzling recovery of the early postwar years. While Mayne is not unaware of some flaws in postwar European society—a small minority outside of the general affluence; intellectuals alienated by industrial civilization—these are not given much significance. However, as Raymond Aron points out in *In Defense of Decadent Europe,* social decadence almost necessarily accompanies advances in material well-being and individual liberty. Material well-being and personal liberty erode the deeply felt collective beliefs that are essential for a society's ultimate survival. While the consequences of this problem were not readily apparent during Europe's early rebuilding stage, the germs of this deadly virus were already inside the social body.

Postwar Western Europe has eliminated the fervent ethnic nationalism that caused the internecine warfare and other forms of suffering and oppression in Europe's recent past. The elimination of that old collective loyalty created the precondition for postwar progress. Toleration of ethnic differences allowed democracy and personal liberty to flourish. The elimination of national hatreds provided the international peace and open frontiers essential for international commerce—a fundamental cause of postwar prosperity, just as interwar nationalistic protectionism had been a cause of economic depression. The end of European imperialism meant that the continent could concentrate its attention and wealth on internal affairs.

The dissolution of nationalism, however, has been a mixed blessing, for it has left Europeans without any compelling collective belief. While nationalism has decayed, no fervent Europeanism has emerged as a replacement. (Vestigial nationalism has been sufficient to block efforts for greater European integration). As a consequence, postwar European national and transnational institutions are critically lacking the fervent ideological commitment needed to motivate people to make sacrifices for their own defense. In the past, millions of Europeans were willing to risk death for their homelands, even if their governments did little to benefit them, or if, in fact, their governments were engaged in ruthless aggression rather than actual defense. Today, however, few Europeans seem willing to die in the defense of governments and institutions that have obviously treated them much better than their earlier counterparts. It is because of this lack of a strong ideological underpinning that Western Europe has been unable to defend itself, despite its great wealth and more-than-adequate population base.

Much has been made of Western Europe's incomplete political integration as a cause of its military impotence. Yet there is no material reason for Western Europe not to establish a sufficient military deterrent even in its present political form. The 5th-century B.C. Greek city-states were much more politically disunited than present-day Western Europe, yet they prevailed against the mighty Persian Empire. Today, numerically small and impoverished Afghan freedom fighters are

In the Mail

***Operation Peace for Galilee: The Israeli-PLO War in Lebanon* by Richard A. Gabriel; Hill & Wang; New York.** An examination of, primarily, the Israeli Defense Force in Lebanon and a questioning of what "defense" means in that context.

***The Manciple's Tale, Volume II, Part 10, the Variorum Chaucer* edited by Donald C. Baker; University of Oklahoma Press; Norman, OK.** Another gorgeous yet scholarly volume for Chaucerites only.

***To Make Democracy Safe for America: Patricians and Preparedness in the Progressive Era* by Michael Pearlman; University of Illinois Press; Urbana, IL.** A look at the history of universal military training—or UMT, as the insiders designate it.

***A Legend of Saint Dismas and Other Poems* by Peter Gallwey; Ignatius Press; San Francisco.** Poems that are unashamed to present "Gospel truths and high thoughts." It should come as no surprise that they were written around the turn of the century.

***Reason within the Bounds of Religion* by Nicholas Wolterstorff; Wm. B. Eerdmans; Grand Rapids, MI.** An enlarged edition of the 1976 book that insists that the Gospel play a role in matters of reason.

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able to put up resistance against the Soviet Union. Given the critical importance of wealth and technology as determinants of military power in this nuclear age, it would seem that Western Europe could easily establish a credible deterrent. Because of its lack of will, however, Western Europe has depended on the United States for its military protection for all of the postwar period. And today even this relationship seems dangerous to many Europeans who fear even the possibility of becoming involved in war. Thus, many seek self-satellization; they value the fruits of the postwar era so little that they are ready to surrender them preemptively to avoid the risk of war.

The dazzling achievements of postwar Europe do not make up the complete picture of the situation. Undoubtedly, in most humane aspects Western Europe has made remarkable advances compared to its nationalistic, militaristic, imperialistic past. If the verdicts of history were rendered by a court concerned about the treatment of mankind, postwar Western Europe would have little to worry about. But while peace, brotherhood, a high standard of living, and individual freedom are desirable and admirable traits, they count for little in the scheme of world history which revolves around power. Paradoxically, it is those very newly established virtues that have put Europe's survival in jeopardy. Europeans no longer threaten each other nor seek to subjugate other peoples, but they no longer have the will to defend themselves, either. Ruthless, strong-willed barbarians have overpowered prosperous and peaceful higher civilizations in the past; the future may bode ill for Western Europe's survival. It would appear that postwar Western Europe represents not a renaissance, as Mayne seems to think, but the afterglow of a spiritually moribund society that will inexorably and swiftly lose its physical existence as well. The physical survival of Western Europe seems to require a miracle. In the Christian scheme of things, of course, miracles cannot be completely discounted. □

Playing by Perverted Rules

***Lobbying for Freedom in the 1980's: A Grass-Roots Guide to Protecting Your Rights;* Edited by Kenneth P. Norwick; Wideview/Perigee; New York.**

Susan J. Tolchin and Martin Tolchin: *Dismantling America: The Rush to Deregulate;* Houghton Mifflin; Boston.

by Daniel Dickinson

What is freedom? To the ancient Greeks, freedom existed in the margins: it was that vacuum of authority between the just demands of religion and culture and the rational requirements of the State. Medieval thought, via Aquinas and Bonaventura, concurred in this assessment. It was only with the development of the English Enlightenment that, in Western thought, this world view changed. To John Locke and his peers, freedom was God's gift to mankind, a natural right bestowed by a gracious Creator. Consequently, governments that unduly restricted freedom opposed both Divine Will and choice. As Spinoza put it, "Not only can freedom be granted without prejudice to the public peace, but also, without such freedom, piety cannot flourish nor the public peace be secure." It was this understanding of man's relation to his universe that informed the thinking of Washington and Jefferson, and led to the creation of the American Republic.

For important segments of the public, the traditional concept of freedom has been translated into something quite different from what the Founding Fathers understood. In particular, the so-called "new class," those scions of the prosperous 1950's, has taken the values of "liberty" and made of them something uniquely its own. In *Lobbying for Freedom* and *Dismantling America,* these qualities are exhibited as what they really are. *Lobbying for Freedom* is largely a project of a variety of associates of the American Civil Liberties Union. Author-editor Norwick, for example, served as legislative director of the ACLU's New York branch, where, no doubt, he put his impressive knowledge of how the legislative process really works to counterproductive uses. In *Lobbying,* Norwick's central concern is the preservation of "individual rights," i.e., the right to abortion, the right to hawk pornography, the right to impose one's homosexuality on others, the right to ingest hazardous drugs, and so on. Individual rights such as, say, gun ownership or opening a Christian school, are not mentioned. It's no coincidence.

Throughout the volume, Norwick and those who've authored his various chapters on "rights" sing the praises of liberty. Despite their words, it is quite clear that Norwick's brand of liberty is highly selective: it's available in nearly unlimited proportions for some and is quite restricted for others. In the chapter on "reproductive freedom," for example, a woman's "right to privacy" is considered as a near absolute. Caution flags are raised against the nefarious doings of Senator Orrin Hatch, who is proposing "an amendment that would . . . give fertilized eggs more constitutional rights than now exist for human beings." More accurately, what the act proposes is to grant the right to life to unborn children: a right they had in nearly every state until the 1973 Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion. Later on, readers are warned about the insidious attempts to restrict "reproductive rights"; some Jesuit doctors, the ACLU author notes, have actually re-

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fused to perform abortions! The message is clear: the rights of some people deserve both protection and extention. As for others . . .

In effect, what emerges is an Orwellian concept of freedom: language is distorted to give meanings to words that could not be found in any dictionary. For example, there is a long tale about the woes homosexuals have experienced. Surely they should be given their "rights." And what do these rights include? To name one, the right to rent an apartment in your home, whether you care to lease to homosexuals or not. The author concedes that normally people have the right to determine who will utilize their property; however, "Gay people have traditionally been objects of hatred. . . . Any group so abused needs special protection." Besides, discrimination "on account of sexual orientation . . . is, at bottom, irrational." And who, after all, could favor "irrational rights"? It is not unlike *Pravda's* explanation of the Soviet Union's refusal to allow free emigration. After all, the U.S.S.R. is the greatest place in the world to live. Only crazy people would want to leave and the State, in its great humanity, could not allow the mentally ill to harm themselves by departing.

Regarding censorship, an extreme standard is upheld: virtually any restriction on pornography is an attack on free speech. Does that mean that the public must be involuntarily subjected to the stuff because the drive-in theater visible from your picture window is running a constant stream of X-rated flicks? The author approvingly quotes Justice Powell, "we are inescapably captive audiences for many purposes." Besides, values are changing. The warning is implicit: you had better change with them.

It is in this last area that Norwick and his cohorts really take the mask off and reveal their "freedom" for what it actually is. Repeatedly, we are told that the emergence of "new class" values is inevitable. Traditional concepts of sex roles are "relics of a different age"; the widespread acceptance of homosexuality is "only a matter of time"; soon the use of marijuana and other "recreational drugs" will be "generally accepted." The freedom Norwick and company endorse bears no relation to any real conception of what freedom is, not even that concept advocated by extreme libertarians. Norwick's liberty is merely the right of one group of self-centered, narcissistic Americans to impose their bizarre cultural values on the broader society. As such, it should be strenuously opposed.

Dismantling America, will probably be read with enthusiasm and enjoyment by the same people who will like *Lobbying for Freedom*. In a sense, that is as it should be, for, as different as they are, the bottom line of both volumes is the same: "Give us what we want," and to blazes with anyone else.

Essentially, the subject of *Dismantling America* is regulation. Largely a matter of state and local concern, the regulation of business and industry did not come under Federal purview until the turn of the century, when popular crusading and muckraking against the railroads, the "trusts," and the "robber barons" led to the creation of the first regulatory agencies. Small in scope and limited in powers, these bureaucracies generally operated only within specific areas of responsibility. It wasn't until the

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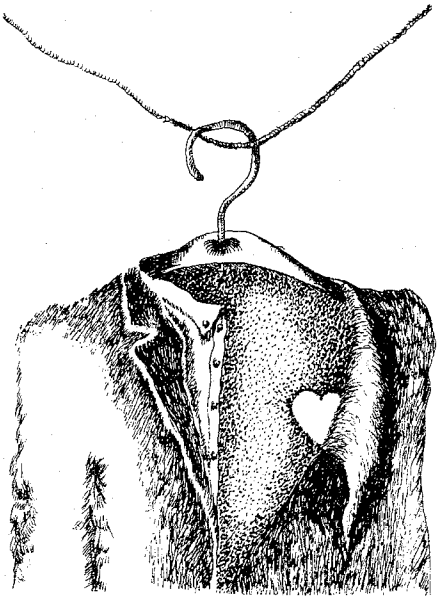
Administration of Lyndon Johnson that the regulatory explosion took place. Propelled by a desire to utilize the power of government to create a "Great Society," Johnson and his successors established dozens of new regulatory authorities, and vastly expanded the powers and budgets of those that existed. As a result, the tenacles of the Federal government reached into areas they never had before, the costs of regulatory compliance soared to over $100 billion annually, and consumer choices were limited as bureaucracies rather than individuals made crucial decisions regarding safety, quality, and reliability.

When Ronald Reagan took office in 1980, he pledged to reverse the trend towards the regulation of American society. Specifically, he promised to "get government off our backs and out of our pockets." Has he succeeded? An objective observer might conclude that the so-called "Reagan revolution" was somewhat less than a total shake-up in the regulatory area. While the rate of regulatory growth has been considerably slowed, there are, in fact, more rules on the books now than there were when Reagan took office. And while some agency budgets have been cut, virtually all remain in business with their missions intact; even the Departments of Education and Energy, which were supposed to be abolished, still exist three years into the supposed turnover. If this is a revolution, it's been an awfully quiet one.

Not so to the Tolchins, two Washington-based political commentators. According to their analysis, the tumult is all around. They claim that "deregulation is a code word for dismantling the regulatory process." And that's bad, for, in the words of the late Jerry Wurf, chief of the Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, "regulation is the key to a civilized society."

As the Tolchins see it, our world is a grim and dangerous landscape populated by irresponsible private industries that have "the power to alter our genes, invade our privacy and destroy our environment. . . . Only government [can] protect citizens from the awesome consequences of technology run amuck." And, apparently, from the results of their own choices. Fear is the author's constant refrain: if there isn't a further expansion of regulations, then disasters on an unprecedented scale will occur. Like the proponents of the nuclear freeze, who also shamelessly pander to people's fears, the Tolchins are typical of today's liberals. Where once, under Roosevelt, liberalism forwarded an



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expansive, optimistic view of tomorrow's world, contemporary liberalism is based on a dread of the future; its vision is constricted, pessimistic.

It is when dealing with the nuclear and airline industries that the Tolchin's biases truly show. To the authors, the nuclear industry is a prime example of corporate irresponsibility. Its regulatory authorities are simply the worst exemplars of "captive agencies," bureaucracies which exclusively serve the interests of the industries they are supposed to supervise. Their argument is made through the quotation of one regulatory commissioner—presumably all the others have no opinions on any of these matters. The nuclear industry's outstanding safety record and its real contributions to the nation's energy needs are blithely ignored. Acknowledging that people are sometimes a bit rough on the nuclear companies, the Tolchins admit that "The most credible argument against the intervenors is . . . [that] they are 'anti-nuke,' and their real mission is to drive the nuclear industry out of business." However, this little fact shouldn't restrain us from giving such people a voice, often the deciding voice, in whether we will have nuclear energy. Similarly, concerning airline regulation, the negative is emphasized to the almost complete disadvantage of the positive. While it is true that many of the major companies suffered from deregulation, as well as from the drastic increase in the price of jet fuel and the recession, the consumer did not suffer. Prices have dropped dramatically in most touring markets since decontrol, dozens of new airlines have been created, commuter services to small communities have expanded dramatically, and customers have enjoyed choices never before available, from brown-bag low-cost People Express flights to first-class-only travel on Air One. The point of airline deregulation was not, as the Tolchins imagine, to benefit the "bigs." Its purpose was to harness the marketplace to the benefit of the consumer. In this sense, it has been an unqualified success.

It is in this last area, the nature of that which aids the customer, that the linkage with the Norwick book is most clearly established. Rather surprisingly for a volume with pretentions to forwarding the cause of "consumer rights," *Dis-*

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mantling America makes little mention of the role education plays in assisting in making wise choices. This is probably because the authors have little regard for choice. Edmund Burke once said that "the people never give up their liberties but under some delusion." The great mirage of our times is that you can have liberty and prosperity without risk or personal responsibility. If we, as a nation, continue to pursue our illusion, we'll find ourselves neither safe nor free. □

Notables

Two Cultures

Claiming that the modern liberal culture in America is undergoing the process of sovietization may seem to some hysterical, to others the ultimate in *mauvais ton.* However, what do we call these practices, so closely associated with the official Soviet culture, of erasing politically discredited personages from historiography, photographs, and films? We call it a totalitarian method of falsifying history and reality, an absolutist attempt to suppress truth and superimpose lies for ideological profit, a manifestation of tyrannical contempt for fundamental fairness in public matters. If, in the name of dogma, people and ideas are sentenced to non-being and are eradicated from objective existence by censors lacking even a shred of moral incertitude, the democratic conscience falls prey to quasi-fascist or quasi-communist cultural politics. Equity and objectivity still seem to be perceived as virtues in *our* cultural universe; most of us still tend to believe that differences of opinion form social values and that it would be inconceivable for the modern American liberal to take away voting rights from those who wish to vote Republican. But, oddly enough, the modern American liberal, especially in the Manhattan publishing industry, seems to feel not a modicum of hesitation when obliterating or obscuring the cultural merits of nonliberals.

Harper & Row, distinguished Manhattan publishers, recently put on the market 800-odd pages of something entitled *20th Century Culture* and subtitled *A Biographical Companion.* It contains some 2,000 names of people who—according to the editors—defined and shaped the 20th century through their works and ideas. The entries were prepared by 300 experts and scholars, almost all of them British, which, naturally, makes them introduce every British pharmacologist as a pylon of culture. The whole was edited by Alan Bullock, former vice-chancellor of Oxford University, and R. B. Woodings, another prominent Oxonian. And it is here where the trouble, or malaise, begins.

On the surface, a sort of detached objectivity in viewing people from Lenin and Einstein to Koyré (a French philosopher) and the Rolling Stones seems to prevail. But a closer look reveals more. The leadership of Lord Bullock, a respected scholar known for his saliently left-of-center sympathies, has acquired peculiar dimensions. Not that all the vocal critics of the modern liberal mind and ethos are not there: some sure are—Orwell, Koestler, Faulkner, C. S. Lewis, Waugh, Santayana, Mencken, etc.—but they're there ensconced in the glory of their paramount achievements sealed forever by death. Many whose accomplishments are of enormous influence, but too openly against what Lord Bullock would prefer—for instance, Leo Strauss in philosophy, Richard Weaver in history of culture—are not, though the *Companion* is brimming with their contemporary detractors of liberal faith. Things are getting much worse when we come to literature. Where suchlikes as Mailer, Baldwin, even Borroughs, abound there's no room for O'Hara, Cozzens, or Wouk. And things are getting really obnoxious when we try to examine the lists of thinkers and contributors to the contemporary affairs. The entire scope of nonliberal American philosophers, historians, and scholars in the humanities with a record of direct impact on thinking in modern America—Robert Nisbet, Irving Kristol, Russell Kirk, Whittaker Chambers, Robert Nozick, Eric Voegelin, Jacques Barzun, to mention a few—simply do not exist for Lord Bullock. He lists Ms. Kate Millett, attributing "scientific" value to her work, but refuses, of course, to mention Professors Moynihan, Glaezer, Wilson, or Banfield, or God forbid, Phyllis Schlafly, someone who routed *ideologically* and *socially* Ms. Millet's ideas and influence. Lord Bullock's partisanship (sectarianism?) seems to take even more cruel forms when treating his own compatriots: neither Muggeridge, Kingsley Amis, nor Paul Johnson exist in his summary, nor do representatives of the group of scholars and writers associated with *Encounter* magazine, perhaps the most brilliant intellectual congregation in contemporary England, among whom Lord Bullock could have easily found some of his colleagues from his alma mater, people of no less respectable credentials than his own.

The Western world is divided, in our time, into two cultures: the liberal culture and the culture of those who question some of the liberal values, their validity, utility, and application to the ills of our epoch. One of those cultures is hegemonic and—of late—quite brutal in exercising the principles and privileges of its domination. As it monopolizes the sources of information on almost every intellectual, popular, and educative level, not all of those who wish to know, actually, know much about the existence of the other culture. Lord Bullock once again has made deft use of this arrangement: his contribution to the uniformity of what should be known according to the liberal orthodoxy is prodigious. □

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The Joy of Cents

Keith Bradley and Alan Gelb: *Worker Capitalism: The New Industrial Relations;* The MIT Press; Cambridge, MA.

Leonard M. Greene: *Free Enterprise Without Poverty;* W. W. Norton; New York.

Wynne Godley and Francis Cripps: *Macroeconomics;* Oxford University Press; New York.

by Mark G. Michaelsen

As in almost any field, economics is dominated by a very few seminal works. Still there are those who must publish or perish, those with an axe to grind and sufficiently impressive academic credentials or enough cash to make the printing presses turn, and those who truly are able to make a useful contribution to the science/art, all of whom produce, produce, produce. This leads to academic trickle-down. Much academic economic posturing slips through the cracks and washes away into the underground stream of oblivion. But some authors, for good or ill, float to the top. Keynes, Friedman, and Galbraith guided policy for a time. Then some fresh and trendy idea took hold, conferring stardom on the originator and his political apostles. Consider recent phenomena: Wanniski and the supply-side crowd, including Republicans and Boll Weevils; Robert Reich, Lester (some uncharitable colleagues in Cambridge call him "Less than") Thurow, the Atari Democrats. Each enjoys media clout. Unfortunately, this is an election year: few things are more dismal than economics tinged with politics.

The purveyors of economic snake oil, e.g., the supply-siders and the neoliberals, though, are anything but gloomy. They are, after all, spreading the politics of joy: "Follow our map to plenty. Elect representatives who share our views. We know how to manage the economy." (The supply-siders, to be fair, really thought that if taxes were cut sufficiently, production, income, and employment would take off. They were only half right because they failed to anticipate the executive's failure to keep spending and debt under control.) The media hype surrounding political movements often obscures really important progress in economic thought, where the best hardly ever shines the brightest. Who today among our political analysts, our media commentators, even our venerated avatars, the pop economists and politicians, has read von Mises? About all we know after two centuries of rigorous study of the economics of the world is one thing: we don't know enough about the economy to tamper with it. Nevertheless, statesmen have a lasso on the economy and they aim to tame it.

The authors of *Worker Capitalism* have done their best to infuse good systems analysis with the politics of joy. They have here the makings of a reasonably good contribution to the science, but they are eager to be media stars. To some extent, they already are. Keith Bradley is a visiting scholar from Cambridge University at the Wharton School and Alan Gelb is an economist with the World Bank. Their style of exposition is lively and their study of what happens when employees buy a failing firm, and why they should (not exclusively a normative question), is actually very interesting.

But, "To face the challenge, [of structural transformation in the economy] new forms of industrial policy are called for," write the authors. And lest anyone mistake their intentions, they make them clear: "These need to be directed particularly towards two objectives—the stimulation of employment and the furthering of productive efficiency." Bradley and Gelb argue that employee buy-outs would help make the transition from a manufacturing economy to a service economy less painful, and, one perceives, more manageable. This book carries intellectual spears for the Atari Democrats.

Bradley and Gelb advocate that the Federal government assist and partially fund worker takeovers. Their obligatory Greek model showing why workers may choose ownership over unemployment is only a tautology. Perhaps if the authors had not been so eager to catch a political wave, they might have devoted some attention to how employee stock options are used in growth firms. Employee stock ownership schemes are really catching fire in computers and other explosive industries. By failing to explore how stock incentive plans induce workers and management to concentrate on long-run strategies for growth, rather than short-term profitability and immediate financial gratification, the authors leave gaping holes in their argument.

Strangely, Bradley and Gelb often find themselves arguing for the free market, not for the managed version they profess to advocate. Worker buyouts are a superb way for employees to delay final plant closures, granted. But those takeovers are a rational market choice; if the alternative is unemployment, freely choosing workers will opt for lower wages or deferred compensation in the form of ownership if those choices are available. A class of entrepreneurs, men like Louis Kelso and John Crichton, even specialize in facilitating these arrangements. But market forces require no overt help from the state. This is where their analysis is fundamentally off-target.

Leonard Greene probably does not aspire to media stardom. He is an entrepreneur, the inventor of the aircraft stall-warning indicator, who now oversees a tidy empire of enterprises related to flight safety. A book about the real world from a man who understands it always

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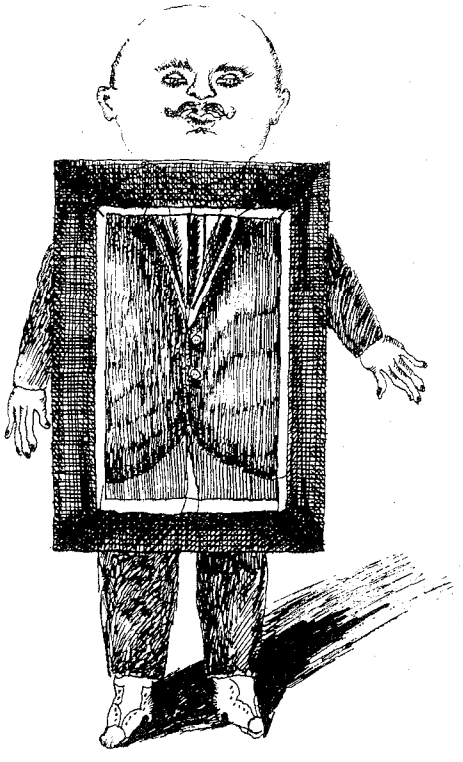
commands attention. For years now, Greene has been promoting a simple idea: replace all categorical income transfer programs with lump-sum payments in cold, hard cash. In this book, he calls the payment a Guaranteed Income Supplement. It resembles Friedman's negative income tax and the ill-starred Nixon Family Assistance Plan. Greene thinks that by cashing-out and adjusting benefit amounts, we (the body politic) could eliminate the morass of conflicting benefit regulations and the work-disincentive effects of the current welfare system. But the system is not just snarled; it's a disaster. Greene cites the heart-rending tale of the department store package-wrapper who set about to be fired from her minimum-wage job because her take-home pay was no more attractive than unemployment compensation. He tells of the cripple who received $2,275 in retroactive Supplemental Security Income entitlements, only to be disqualified for further benefits because of his new assets. And he advises us he knew of a promising young employee who quit his job because his salary, though hardly princely, jeopardized his family's subsidized housing status.

If that's saddening, consider this: the amount that the U.S. government spends each year to fight poverty is more than three times the amount needed to lift every man, woman, and child in the country above the poverty line. But the poor and hungry are still with us because our vast welfare system was assembled piecemeal more to please important political interest groups than to alleviate poverty. Especially exasperating, both for those who wish to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps and those who must foot the bill for the system, is the regressive schedule of benefit reductions for those who elect to leave the dole to seek useful employment. What amounts to a marginal tax rate of from 60 to 100 percent on earned income is a roadblock to productive lives. It is hard to imagine a system which penalizes work and rewards idleness more effectively, or which, providing in-kind payments such as housing subsidies or foodstamps, more paternally precludes responsible market choices by beneficiaries.

Greene's proposal makes a great deal of intuitive sense, as do other market-oriented prescriptions such as the negative income tax and benefit vouchers. But unless some clever political entrepreneur can cloak these dismal proposals in the politics of joy and market the concept convincingly to the



electorate, prospects for welfare reform are minimal.

According to the book jacket for *Macroeconomics,* both Godley and Cripps are Cambridge hangers-on who "are now regarded as unorthodox but creative champions of the Keynesian tradition." They are also members of the "Cambridge Economic Policy Group . . . known for their critiques of government policy and their eclectic model and research methods which distance them from the prevailing fashions of the decade—monetarism and econometrics."

In the old days, economists used to speak of an avant-garde concept called the "neoclassical synthesis." This was a theoretical compromise between the microeconomic analysis of the classical school (often called "Austrian"), and Keynesian macroeconomic management (i.e., in the long run we are all dead, so any policy is better than none). By whatever name, this synthesis of short and long-run policy alternatives and implications has found wide acceptance among economists of all persuasions. What Godley and Cripps offer is yet more middle ground. Are you fed up with the same old policy dilemma of monetarism vs. Keynesianism, rules vs. reason? *Macroeconomics* is just what the doctor ordered. Godley and Cripps have done their best to incorporate all the science seems to know about the relationships between the markets for goods and the market for capital. Their model of an economy driven by inventories and credit is intriguing. But what kind of coherent national economic policies could flow from such an understanding?

Unfortunately, the answer seems to be more of the same haphazard and unpredictable mix of monetary and fiscal interventions which have proven so unreliable in the past. Keynesians, almost by definition, view the economy as some elaborate hydraulic apparatus which can be kept boiling merrily at some externally postulated equilibrium by merely spinning a dial here to increase injections every time the cranky machine makes a decision on its own to spring a leak there. There is nothing in this exposition to suggest that government assume a more passive role.

If government can manage the economy successfully, as Godley and Cripps suggest, think of the joyful politics which could emanate from this intellectual base. But such an outcome is doubtful. One hopes that no joyful warrior will manage to stay awake through the boring book and comprehend its policy implications. □

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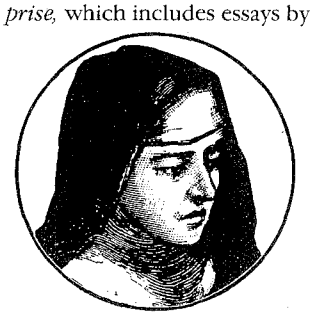
COMMENDABLES

Of Isms and Idolatry

The Economic System of Free Enterprise: Its Judeo-Christian Values and Philosophical Concepts; Edited by Paul C. Goelz; St. Mary's University Press; San Antonio, TX.

During their relatively short but incredibly bloody existence as a world historical force, Marxists have murdered millions of men, women, and children, largely without regret. Many Marxists, however, are having some second thoughts about the initial "killing" Marxism announced, that of God. Not that they have regained any faith in the transcendent God of Scripture. Hardly. But for propaganda purposes in the pervasively religious West, leftists have decided it would be tactfully useful to *appear* to worship God, while actually creating the utopian idol of a deified Militant Socialist. Fortunately, some intelligent Christians have little difficulty resisting this inept perfidy. *The Economic System of Free Enterprise,* which includes essays by



Gerald R. Ford, Michael Novak, and Irving Kristol, provides solid arguments for the view that Judeo-Christian values are far more compatible with economic freedom than leftist dogma. Indeed, though the contributors sometimes defend "capitalism," the term "free enterprise" used in the collection's title is probably wiser. The ideological use of the word *capitalism,* after all, began with Marx, who was convinced that all aspects of life must be subsumed beneath one materialistic *ism* or another. To the degree that free enterprise becomes truly an *ism* in those Marxian terms, it is religiously indefensible. The religious strength of free-market theory is, then, precisely in its humility: it does not pretend to explain or govern all of human existence in economic terms, as do the various strands of Marxism. Mammon may win idolatrous followers in the free market, but it must do so without the sanctimonious robes of modern ideology. (BC) □

Frankly Speaking

Martyn Burke: ***The Commissar's Report;*** Houghton Mifflin; Boston.

This book is supposed to be funny, risible, or downright hilarious. The subject is the U.S. during the Cold War as seen by a Soviet diplomatic minion who became enamored of "Enemy Number One" through his furtive readings of his party bigwig father's contraband copies of *Life.* Actually, the contents of the book are rather bleak because the author, no doubt by accident, makes some very telling observations about Americans: the intellectuals' desire to be duped ("I began pitching revolution in such a way that it seemed the ideal thing to fill the void, giving their existence some purpose after all. It was like selling water to camels.") and the general public's tendency toward self-flagellation (e.g., speaking of the immediate post-McCarthy period, the narrator notes, "We murdered millions under Stalin; they throw a dozen or so in jail for a year and let a few scoundrels loose on the country. Yet *they* feel guilty. We don't."). The truth that manages to emerge in *The Commissar's Report* is, indeed, quite sad. □

A Book of Warnings

General Sir John Hackett: ***The Profession of Arms;*** Macmillan; New York.

Among the most troubling military advantages that the Soviet Union holds over the United States is one not assessed by counting tanks or measuring weapon technology. The Soviet soldier, sailor, or airman generally enjoys much higher social prestige than does his American counterpart, who is too often

viewed as a near-barbarian unfit for polite company or intelligent conversation. Unfortunately, such a disparity in public prestige could translate into a decisive difference in battlefield morale.

General Sir John Hackett traces contemporary America's "lack of sympathy . . . towards its armed forces" to the "grave disservice" done the army by the media in Vietnam. This seems undeniable. But whatever the reasons for the current lack of respect for American military men, such respect must somehow be restored. For, as Hackett's history of professional soldiers makes clear, societies that do not support and appreciate their military often end up under the heel of societies that do. □

IN FOCUS

Of Careers, Criminals, and Creative Writers

Theodore Dreiser: ***An Amateur Laborer;*** University of Pennsylvania Press; Philadelphia.

Nelson Algren: ***The Devil's Stocking;*** Arbor House; New York.

By the time the average American child has reached adolescence, he has been asked hundreds of times by solicitous relatives and politely curious strangers, "What are you going to be when you grow up?" Though this almost ritualized query is typically part of an adult's awkward efforts to make small talk with a child, its ubiquity has profound implications. First, such a question presupposes the

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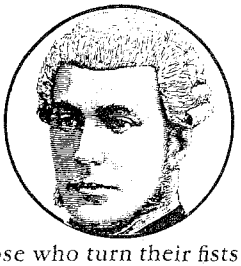
marvelous occupational freedom that America affords the young. However, the implicit assumption that career choice determines what a child will *be,* not merely *do,* suggests that in modern America one's job has a problematic and troubling ontological dimension.

Judeo-Christian thought has usually legitimated various social hierarchies as divinely authorized (or at least divinely permitted) as a means of maintaining order and continuity. But it has also insisted that the standing (or better, the *kneeling*) of the soul before God has no particular relationship to social class or employment. Sainthood was open to mayors, bakers, artists, and blacksmiths alike, and everyone understood that the scriptural admonition to "hold fast our profession" was a warning to all against apostasy and had nothing to do with distinctive career orientation. But in a modern world where no shared religious "profession" unites men, different secular professions, "held fast to" with quasi-religious zeal, sharply divide them. No longer looking at one another as essentially similar cobelievers in a shared creed, men who make their living in different ways have come to regard one another as more fundamentally different than alike.

In particular, those few who make careers as creative writers now often see themselves as a breed wholly apart from and usually much above the rest of the human race. Such an attitude informs Theodore Dreiser's *An Amateur Laborer,* an unfinished account—here published for the first time—of a period in the author's life when depression and illness rendered him unable to write. Seeking to earn a meager living and to recover his health, Dreiser temporarily accepted employment with the New York Central Railroad as a laborer, first in a carpentry shop, then with a masonry crew. Largely because the typical railroad worker felt no professional aspirations in literature, Dreiser regarded him, as he in turn regarded Dreiser, as a "curiosity," virtually another species, a different type of creature. Dreiser perceived a great "gulf" between himself as a writer and the "barren lot" of other laborers "well fitted to bother with the infinitely common things with which they were laboring."



A rather different authorial attitude is evident in *The Devil's Stocking* by Nelson Algren, another talented writer commonly grouped with Dreiser under the misleading rubric "realist." (The notion, shared by Algren and Dreiser, that reality can be adequately represented without serious regard for the suprasensory and transcendent is actually the wildest of fantasies.) In his uncritical prepossession with "professionals" of the most unliterary sort imaginable—boxers (Hemingway was an exception, not the rule) and prostitutes—Algren updates and refurbishes the badly tattered myth of the noble savage. But this refurbishing provides no more satisfactory sense of commonality between writer and nonwriter than does Dreiser's aloofness. Most readers and writers can feel little real kinship with those who turn their fists or genitals to profit. Indeed, until authors again learn to use their uncommon gifts to celebrate the dignity and moral stature attainable in every honest walk of life, they must either archly look down upon most of mankind, like Dreiser, or, like Algren, must view the race from the underside. (BC) □

Word Processors

William Bronk: *Vectors and Smoothable Curves;* North Point Press; Berkeley, CA.

Wendell Berry: *Standing by Words;* North Point Press; Berkeley, CA.

Elizabeth Bishop: *The Collected Prose;* Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York.

John McPhee: *La Place de la Concorde Suisse;* Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York.

If quantity had a positive effect on quality, then it could be stated without hesitation that this is the golden age of the essay. After all, only souls lost on desert isles can escape being pelted—by newspapers, newsletters, magazines, journals, TV magazines, and radio broadcasts—with the products of itchy pens; moreover, it's likely that if a modern Crusoe were to discover a corked Perrier bottle washed ashore some languid dawn, it would include something like "Notes Toward an Understanding of the Intersection Between Shipwrecks and Intellectual Currents *or* Seeing an Uncharted Island on $0 a Day." People tend to imagine that the most vexing form of communication aborning today is the commercial, but that's only because (A) commercials tend to be obnoxious and therefore obvious and (B) commercials are made by a few for the many. Modern essays are often obnoxious but they tend not to be obvious: they are sort of like the atmosphere in, say, Gary, Indiana, which is unpleasantly apparent at first, but which one quickly adapts to since it *is* the environment. This leads to point B: essays are made by many for many—or at least one supposes that they are scribbled with a large audience in mind; the products themselves are regularly so pitiful that it's hard to imagine that they are written with *anyone* in mind. Whereas amateurs once addressed their particular—or peculiar—muse through the medium of poetry, they now go for prose; an essay, being more limited in physical size, is thought to be more readily produced than a novel. Novelists and other professional writers recognize that the proliferating number of magazines constitute a prime income possibility between books, so they, too, add their musings and observations to an already Everest-sized pile of prose.

This is not to state that all the heirs of Montaigne are illegitimate. William Bronk, for example, in addition to being a bona

fide poet, is a fine prose stylist (and his competent sentences have, one suspects, influenced other interesting but similarly little-known writers like Ken-

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neth Gangemi). Bronk's talent as an essayist is rooted in his appreciation of the truth that while an essay may deal with the physical—Mayan ruins or the works of Whitman—it must speak, explicitly or implicitly, of the metaphysical if it is to aspire to something beyond merely a medium

for information or data. Consider, for example, the following:

> One feels that the buildings at Machu Picchu, which must have been old at the time of the Spanish conquest, are nevertheless more of our own time than buildings which must have been erected afterwards—the churches of Cuzco, for example, in the crumbled and rubbled remains of their baroque splendor. These Spanish colonial buildings are now so obviously antique: they are, as we say, "dated." The buildings at Machu Picchu, on the other hand, are not shabby and out of fashion.

Lesser authors would be satisfied with making demi-Baedeker style observations. Wendell Berry is another writer who isn't

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satisfied with essaying the trivial (which leads us to wonder about North Point Press: How can it manage to publish such solid prose in books that are carefully and durably constructed in this age of disposable products?). One of Berry's key arguments in *Standing by Words* is that language is in a state of degeneration and that "this increasing unreliability of language parallels the increasing disintegration . . . of persons and communities." As people become opposed to simple norms like prescriptive grammar because they are taught that doing one's own thing is as good as any others' doings (Flaubert = Vidal = John Doe), social structures become less organized since there are no defining rules and limiting orders. Each person becomes his or her own essayist of reality: anarchy abounding.

The Collected Prose of Elizabeth Bishop, which contains both nonfiction and fiction, is a pleasant volume that has provoked numerous gushing essays in the various book reviews. The situation brings to mind the elementary school classroom demonstration of a chain reaction, the one in which

a ping-pong ball on a mousetrap is set off and which, in turn, causes other like setups to be activated in almost an exponential progression. Soon, of course, the arrangement is exhausted. Last year Bishop's *The Complete Poems* were published; now we have the prose. That should be it: the arrangement exhausted. But essayists are an anxious breed. Elizabeth Hardwick wrote in her piece on Bishop's prose in *The New Republic*: "Many look forward to the publication of Elizabeth Bishop's letters, look forward to knowing in full the incomparable glow, the luster of thoughts and sights written in her small, curling, rather crooked script." All of which will be compared in essays set in small, straight, rather cold type.

John McPhee is well known to one portion of the reading public as a staff writer, or essayist, for *The New Yorker*, and to another segment as the author of numerous books. His most recent book, *La Place de la Concorde Suisse*, is like some of his others in that, as the little type including copyright information states, "The text of this book originally appeared in *The New Yorker*." While his entrepreneurial drive, like his prose style, can't be faulted on purely technical grounds, it does bring up the question of whether it's really necessary that the world of letters be inhabited by the essays of McPhee in magazine, hard-bound, and paperback forms. True, the essays of Brock, Berry, and Bishop have appeared before, but some of the Bronk was featured in *Origin* and other hard-to-locate places; Berry's pieces are accessible but not commonly at hand (e.g., *Hudson Review*): Bishop, being dead, has no say in the matter. McPhee doesn't have any of these excuses. (GSV) □

Perceptibles

George W. S. Trow: *The City in the Mist;* Little, Brown; Boston.

What's in a name? Fair Juliet's answer notwithstanding, we insist that there is something to it. Take the case of a relatively young author who places two initials between his given title and surname. There's something to that in the closing years of this century, though it would be barely monocle-raising in the 19th century in one of the better London clubs. George W. S. Trow seems to be a man out of his proper place and time, which would be 100 years ago across the Atlantic. Stylistically, *The City in the Mist* vents the aspirations of a junior Henry James. Whereas James crafted labyrinths that have, finally, goals, Trow has put together a series of cul-de-sacs. Trow's triumph of form over content results only in a trophy that rings hollow, a bibelot for the over-mannered.

* * *

Ken Auletta: *The Art of Corporate Success: The Story of Schlumberger;* G. P. Putnam's Sons; New York.

In his last outing between hard covers, Mr. Auletta examined that huge, amorphous, ubiquitous mass known as "the underclass." That, of course, is not a particularly tony subject. What's more, members of the underclass don't buy books. Meanwhile, *The One-Minute Manager, In Search of Excellence,* and various and sundry books about Japanese management techniques, quality circles, and the like are hot numbers at the B. Daltons and Waldenbooks and the rest. Showing a grasp of entrepreneurial techniques and a touch of managerial savvy, Mr. Auletta has parlayed his *New Yorker* profile of oil-patch megagiant Schlumberger and its CEO, Jean Riboud, into what will undoubtedly become this season's *Megatrends*—though one that is less, as the insiders put it, "blue-sky" and more "real-

world." One thing puzzles us: with all of the up-and-coming leaders of industry busy reading, who's *doing* anything? □

* * *

Gerard K. O'Neill: *The Technology Edge: Opportunities for America in World Competition;* Simon & Schuster; New York.

Gerard K. O'Neill makes an observation that virtually all Americans have heard, understand, and do little about: other countries, notably Japan, are making giant steps in the development of new (e.g., computer-related) and existing (e.g., auto and steel) technologies; if American managers, workers, academics, students, government officials, etc. don't come up to world speed, the eminence of

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the U.S. will be found only in history books. After essaying several Japanese projects that make today's microelectronic marvels look like curios from the first edition of the Sears Roebuck catalog, O'Neill examines Hewlett-Packard, Delta, DEC, and IBM and finds hope. Hoping is something that Americans are getting good at; working is a different story. □

Waste of Money

Frustration

Joyce Carol Oates: *Mysteries of Winterthurn;* E. P. Dutton; New York.

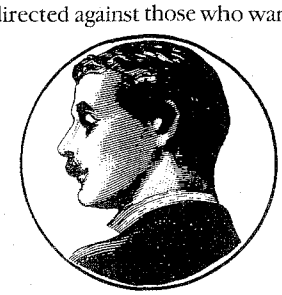
When it's literary gee-whiz time, people like Isaac Asimov—the man who produces books, stories, and essays the way that McDonald's cranks out Big Macs, fries, and Cokes—are trotted out. In the face of an Asimov, many literate persons, most of whom have trouble inventing and penning a complementary closing on the bottom of a Hallmark card, feel as if they are witnessing something truly amazing—as awesome (or awful) as a pea-sized moon rock. Joyce Carol Oates isn't in the same league as some of these word-processing wonders, but when it comes to high-level belles lettres, she is without a peer. Given the number of books that she simply writes about—to say nothing of those she generates—it's hard to imagine that the woman has time to attend to more minor things like eating, sleeping, and personal hygiene. Perhaps she doesn't have time and this explains why she is so, well, *cranky*. After all, whereas a Janet Dailey can spin out a few dozen romances that will go on to sell a few million copies, she doesn't have to worry about being serious, but simply about making sure that things are appropriately tempestuous—and it's a fine line that she must trod. Still, the footwork isn't too complex, so Dailey can appear glamorous while chatting with Johnny, Merv, or whomever. Oates, on the other hand, must continually stay au courant with the entire body of literature that has been produced at least since Homer sang, as well as with the important marginal commentaries made on the foregoing works. It should come as no surprise, then, that the promo shots of Oates tend to show a woman whose hair appears coiffed by a towel and whose eyes sparkle with a patina of obsession.

Virtually all American adults with a high school education (including the dubious schooling of recent years) have heard of Asimov, Dailey, Robert Ludlum, and Louis L'Amour. Each of these writers concentrates on a particular genre that appeals to a specific segment of the book-buying public. Wealth has been the result. Would-be Prousts, Kafkas, and Becketts could, contrariwise, starve to death. Oates would probably like to be remembered along with the names in the last-mentioned group, but she seems to be seduced by the siren's song of royalty checks that's commonly heard by the first-named group. The tension of the situation, the simultaneous pulls from Art and Cash, makes her angry. So Oates writes genre books that are *serious novels,* grist not only for the front page of the *New York Times Book Review,* but also for the mechanics on the inside of the *New York Review of Books.* Oates, in effect, wants to extract revenge from book-buyers: she has, after all, spent hours in libraries pouring over classics, mediocrities, forgotten works, etc., suffered eye strain and writer's cramp, but yet, darn it!, there's Ludlum making American Express commercials, and even corny old L'Amour was asked to contribute to the first revamped issue of *Harper's.* Talk about indignities! She'll get *her* piece of the action, she implicitly vows. But with books like *Mysteries of Winterthurn,* it's not likely. As the title indicates, it's a mystery, one set during a few decades on either side of the turn of the century in New England. It has a high tone and a stylistic complexity that renders it opaque or, more to the point, virtually unreadable. Highbrow readers would, no doubt, be more inclined to stay with Henry James if they're in the mood to puzzle out dark nooks and crannies in prose. General readers have racks and racks to choose from that bulge with better (i.e., more engaging) yarns. One could almost feel sorry for the hapless Oates. Almost. □

Dirty-Scalpel Politics

Bella Abzug with Mim Kelber: *Gender Gap: Bella Abzug's Guide to Political Power for American Women;* Houghton Mifflin; Boston.

Thanks to the Supreme Court, radical feminists no longer perform abortions in poorly lighted back rooms. Instead, they now evidently use those obscure and unhygenic locations to perform surreptitious and coercive sex-change operations on nonfeminist women. This sort of



illicit surgery takes place repeatedly in Bella Abzug's *Gender Gap.* Any female Ms. Abzug encounters who takes the wrong stance on so-called "women's issues"—i.e., ERA, "abortion rights," opposition to nuclear power and multinational corporations, concessions to the Soviet Union, and larger welfare benefits—is, ipso facto, not *really* a woman. Exactly what gender political leaders such as U.N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick or Senator Paula Hawkins have become in Ms. Abzug's perception is not clear; however, it's clear that they are not women. For all her strident rhetoric directed against those who want to "put women in their place," she herself has a clearly defined political place within which she demands that women stay, on pain of excommunication from

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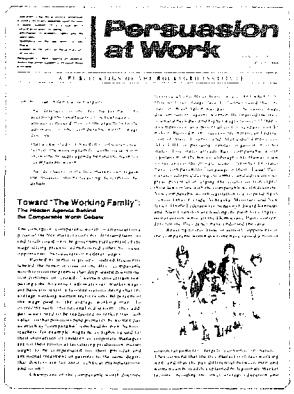

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the sex.

As deceitful and hypocritical as this strategy is, it works well with a credulously liberal media eager to believe that all women are on "their" side. Something like this same duplicitous semantic ploy has long been at work in racial politics, permitting anyone with left-liberal views and the correct skin pigmentation to be a "black spokesman," while denying black conservatives any public racial identity. Jesse Jackson automatically speaks for "the black community"; Thomas Sowell can only express "his own views." Apparently, blacks, too, must "stay in their place." And unfortunately, until this oppressive neo-chauvinism is effectively exposed, more and more Americans will find that choosing political wisdom means confronting media-ordained authorities stripping them of their gender, race, and ethnicity. (BC) ☐

Who Cares?

Roy Blount, Jr.: *What Men Don't Tell Women;* Atlantic-Little, Brown; Boston.

Any man who has spent any time in a line at a grocery store checkout counter has undoubtedly gazed upon the headlines of the tabloids (e.g., "Michael Jackson Found Hiding Elvis!", which tells of a 13-year-old boy

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named Mike who must hide his hound dog from his landlord, and "Woman Loses 20 Pounds in One Day!", which describes an American tourist who had her

purse lifted in London) then moved his orbs over to the cover of the seemingly always-present *Cosmopolitan.* Certainly, a man has to wonder how the cover-girls, who always make *Playboy's* really look like the girls next door, can move—nay—breathe in what there is of their outfits without falling out of place. Cerebration on that subject usually lasts no longer than the point at which the coupons are surrendered. We cite the situation of males not out of some incipient sexism, but simply because we realize that the fair sex knows a few things that the other can only wonder about. (Besides that, consider: just who are those *Cosmo* covers designed for?)

One man whose thoughts about UFO's captured by the Soviets and quasi-rampant cleavage continue long after the groceries are packed away is Roy Blount, Jr., a humorist of sorts whose good-ol'-boy brand of sweetly liberal barbecue sauce has made him a sensation from *People* to the *New York Times* to the *Washington Post*—not to mention the rogue slimnast that can be fitted somewhere amid the three. Ponder this comment written by a woman for the slight, middling *The Nation* about a piece in Blount's *One Fell Soup:* "One really understands testicles after reading 'The Family Jewels,' and one is grateful." Acknowledging and capitalizing upon such gratitude, Blount lays out much of the same type of saucy bilge in *What Men Don't Tell Women,* a book which has its roots in a magazine: not *Cosmopolitan,* but the *Ladies' Home Journal,* a magazine which, our grocery-store cover browsing tells us, typically runs covers that have little to do with *Cosmo, The Nation,* or private portions of the male anatomy. While this state of affairs seems to prove that you can't judge a publication by its wrapping, the Blount tome indicates otherwise: there he is, a well-fed, middle-aged man wearing a tweed sports coat and an opened-neck button-down shirt who is looking very *Cosmo.* This is not to say that the glimpse of his neck or the cleavage formed by his second chin are sexy. But the man is wearing makeup. He is no Boy Roy, but foundation appears to have been applied to his visage with a trowel. Trendy? You bet.

Blount's subjects—sports, drinking, chopping wood, more drinking, economics, living in the country, sports, still more drinking, sexual relations—are, more or less, masculine topics, so it might seem as if he is being true to his title: the inside stuff, though with the proper ideological spin, of course. But women, who instinctively know that cardboard can't cure cancer, no matter what the tabloids claim, and that the *Cosmo* girls can't in- or exhale during shots, certainly have Blount's number—unless they work for *The Nation* or *Ladies' Home Journal.* □

Puppets for Propagandists

Jackie DiSalvo: ***War of Titans: Blake's Critique of Milton and the Politics of Religion;*** University of Pittsburgh Press: Pittsburgh.

Among the worst indignities inflicted upon the working classes is that of being manipulated as a ventriloquist's dummy by bourgeois Marxists. Indeed, the suspicion lingers that were it not for middle- and upper-middle class radicals who hide their own lust for power by projecting their self-serving opinions into a hypothetical "proletarian consciousness," Marxism could never have been born, nor could it now survive. As literary critics, Marxists have proved even more disingenuous, casting their dialectical voice back and forth between the proletarian dummy on one knee and the badly mutilated corpse of a great writer awkwardly situated on the other knee. If Shakespeare were alive to hear what some Marxists are now glibly saying in his name, he would likely begin a renewal of the fine art of tongue excision as demonstrated in *Titus Andronicus.*

The lengths to which this kind of perverse deception may be carried are evident in Jackie DiSalvo's *War of Titans,* an attempt to establish William Blake as a certified Marxist. As an ally to "the Devil's party" opposed to Western religion, metaphysics, and social institutions, Blake was anything but a conservative. But as an artistic and spiritual iconoclast who "in mind and thoughts traveled to heaven" and who scorned Science as "the tree of death," he was also anything but a political activist for the pseudoscience of dialectical materialism. As an utter anarchist, Blake was the sort of "useful" tool that communists hail as a comrade during the revolution and send to the Gulag immediately after their victory. Blake, though, would probably prefer Siberia to being linked by Ms. DiSalvo's "mind-forged manacles" to that dreary materialist Karl Marx. Wedding Marx's logic of "inevitability" to Blake's "inspiration and vision," Ms. DiSalvo announces that Blake was "a class-conscious materialist mystic—whatever that might mean." Just as obscurantist is her attempt to endow Blake with a greater religious stature than Milton by labeling him a "Christian atheist." Within Blake's Beulah land, where all passionately held

"contrarieties are equally true," such self-contradictory statements—as well as Ms. DiSalvo's delirious sloganeering for primitive tribal societies *and* modern technology, for community solidarity *and* the dismantling of every existing social order—might somehow sound harmonious. But in the world of truth and reality, it sounds merely like a self-serious Charlie McCarthy show put on by an academician who throws her voice with a forked tongue. (BC) □

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Zoology

***Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes;* Directed by Hugh Hudson; Screenplay by P. H. Vazak and Michael Austin, based on *Tarzan of the Apes* by Edgar Rice Burroughs; Warner Brothers.**

by Stephen Macaulay

Greystoke raises a large number of questions, most of which will not be addressed here. For example, there's the question of cinematic fidelity to the movie creation portrayed by Johnny Weissmuller from 1932 to 1948. Suffice it to say that no one can play *that* Tarzan any better than Weissmuller, just as no one can hold a match to Basil Rathbone's Holmes. With the matter of why the new Tarzan doesn't let out a long "aaahhh!" out of the way, one could move to the question of fidelity to the creation of Edgar Rice Burroughs. Anyone who wants to sort that one out can consult the 24 original texts or the biography *Tarzan Alive* by Philip José Farmer (Doubleday; New York; 1972). Greater interest should be centered on what the present film says, for it must be assumed

that the director of *Chariots of Fire* didn't undertake this project simply in order to increase his cash flow; perhaps incorrectly, I assume that there was a higher motive involved, an assumption based, by and large, on a feeling that compels me to think that a man who made so thoughtful a film as *Chariots* wouldn't drop his sights and focus on a B-movie.

The bare bones of the plot are these. A proper, civilized English couple, Lord and Lady Greystoke, were shipwrecked on the west coast of Africa in 1888. Alice Clayton gave birth to a son, John Clayton III; she died while the boy was still an infant, age one. John Clayton II, the day of his wife's death, was killed by a "great ape." A female ape that had just lost her child saved the infant Clayton and reared him. The boy became known as Tarzan, or White Skin. Eventually, he was brought to England, where he inherited an estate. Unable to adapt to the Edwardian world (which was still very Victorian when he was there), Tarzan returned to Africa. Finis.

Subelements dot the way in the film. For example, rifle-toting and fast-shooting British gentlemen explorers are shown blasting their way through the jungle. By the time they arrive on the scene, the viewer is conditioned to identify with the apes, so when an ape is shot, it is supposed to be like watching a

defenseless, slow, woman being senselessly murdered by a juvenile delinquent. The pathetic fallacy has a hard time in the face of the film. The upper-crust Brits are shown to be wholly affected, yet underneath the varnish no better than the dregs of society that have been exiled to a post where they thrive like grub-like creatures in the fetid atmosphere of a slimy, smoky hostel at the edge of the jungle. Civilized man, Darwin notwithstanding, seems to have advanced very little—if at all. The final blow to both the viewer and to Greystoke/Tarzan comes when the latter, who has just saved his ape "father" from vivisection in a London museum, witnesses the shooting of the ape by a militia man, who just happened to be handy. Certainly, any of these pieces would be enough to make one turn a proverbial tail and to head back to the hills.

It might seem that Hudson and screenwriters Vazak and Austin are pushing the "Noble Savage" line here, maintaining that the state of nature is good and society bad. Given the sense of most of the events in *Greystoke,* a plausible and strong argument can be made that this is so. However, pretty though the jungle may be, things aren't shown to be totally hunky-dory when it comes to Mother Nature; Queen Victoria (figuratively speaking) isn't the only one who takes it on the chin. For example: the Greystokes are shipwrecked by a storm, and while they survived, the landing site is littered with corpses; Alice Clayton died from a fever, not an over-tight corset; John Clayton, who was peaceably minding his own business, was killed by a marauding ape who had an attitude problem (a teenaged Tarzan, using a man-made knife, eventually had to take care of the beast); a jungle cat tears apart one of Tarzan's playmates—and so on. Nature isn't something devised and maintained like Disney World. Moreover, those people who think that the fresh, rudimentarily witty, and affectionate Tarzan is a paragon of humanity might simply ask themselves if they'd like to have one of his ilk marry into their family.

Hudson's work is more blurred and indistinct than a cut-and-dried "four legs

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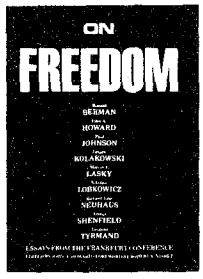

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good, two legs bad." There is a pervasive indication throughout *Greystoke* that a synthesis should be reached. That is, civilized man cut off from nature is a crippled self-creation; nature in the raw is not conducive to the health and well being of man, for if everything were beautiful, then the struggles and travails that are a part of the rise to civilization simply wouldn't have been endured and undertaken. The wholly natural man is a savage; his opposite number is a robot. Either is less than human. Man does not thrive in the jungle (tropical or urban), nor can he long survive in a sterilized, spiritless, rootless condition like some mobile organic computer. Finding the point of synthesis is a primary duty of our species. □

Fleeting Truths

Cyndi Lauper, current clown princess of the new (or, given its nature, is that *gnu?*) rock scene, recently squeaked:

> It was all traditional: the church, the family, the government. And you know what I learned? Those are the biggest oppressors of women that will ever come along.

And girls just wanna have fun, right, Cyndi? □

In the Mail

The General Assembly: Can It Be Salvaged **by Arieh Eilan; The Heritage Foundation; Washington, DC.** Anything is possible, but some things, like the U.N., are more doubtful than others.

Humanism and Capitalism: A Survey of Thought on Morality **by Bernard Murchland; American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research; Washington, DC.** As the author notes: "High culture is commandeered by an intellectual elite; commerce is regarded as of a low order, an intruder in culture's house of sweetness and light." Commerce, of course, makes the mortgage payments.

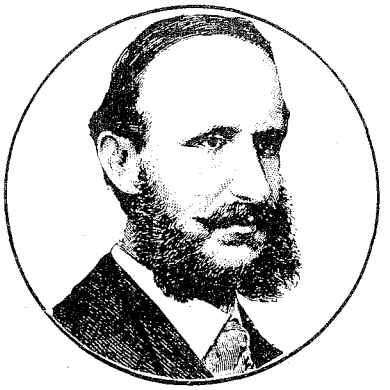
The American Journal of Jurisprudence, Volume 28 **edited by Robert E. Rodes and Charles E. Rice; National Law Institute; University of Notre Dame; Notre Dame, IN.** Any journal that runs an article entitled "The Aesthetics of the Law" is certainly for serious practitioners, not ambulance chasers.

Ship of Fools **by Katherine Anne Porter; Atlantic-Little, Brown; Boston.** Back on another voyage, this time as a trade paperback. Better than *The Love Boat*.

What Price Integrity?

Seth Cagin and Philip Dray: *Hollywood Films of the Seventies: Sex, Drugs, Violence, Rock 'n' Roll, and Politics;* Harper & Row; New York.

One of the big blows to the underground press in America in the 1960's was an ad campaign staged by a major



record company that used such toy-gun revolutionary slogans as "The Man can't bust our music." Not only did the ads employ the rhetoric of the would-be suburban Ché's, but the record company made use of the pages of the weekly, monthly, or occasionally rags to push its latest releases, thus undercutting the pretensions of the so-called urban guerrillas of journalism. While the deflation caused by the record company may be considered to be laudatory, the existence of the campaign in the first place must be deplored. After all, on a very fundamental level it provided legitimacy to a bunch of ink-stained, drug-smoking adolescents. The company was, undoubtedly, intent on one thing: pushing its platters. Similarly, other concerns—blue-jean manufacturers, brewers, cigarette makers, etc.—seized "radical" youth-oriented approaches to peddle their wares. These businesses are, in large part, primary elements of the "Establishment." Any group that panders to the tastes of its putative enemies is one that should be held off at some length.

Hollywood Films of the Seventies is, its main title notwithstanding, actually a nostalgic visit to the late 60's, as exemplified by 1969's *Easy Rider,* for those former "radicals" who are now stockbrokers and insurance salesmen. The subtitle—*Sex, Drugs, Violence, Rock 'n' Roll, and Politics*—consists of key words that unquestionably evoke a Pavlovian response in the intended audience, one that creates a momentary desire for the odors of tear gas and cannabis, the cacophony of feedback from mountains of Marshall amps, and the filthy hygiene that characterized the Woodstock Nation.

Bonnie and Clyde (1967) showed the glamour of being an outlaw; it didn't

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matter that the title characters bought it in the end: one of the key notions was that it's better to burn than to rust. *The Trip* (1967) indicated that LSD was horizon-expanding, even for uptight persons: *Easy Rider* took notions from both of these productions and blended them into a concoction that, authors Cagin and Dray announce with pride in a product of the generation that they identify with, grossed "an estimated $60 million worldwide, earning more money than all the films of Henry Fonda *combined,* up until the 1981 release of *On Golden Pond.*" The appended filmography—from *Alice's Restaurant* to *Zabriskie Point*—consists, by and large, of cinematic efforts that seem to bite the hand that feeds: they are attacks on the status quo, American normalcy, things that are supposedly defended by the Establishment. But where did the monies come from? It makes one wonder about who is defending what, about whether the bitten hand isn't being more than soothed by the action of the other hand, which is raking in bucks at the box office. □

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ART

Fluff

John Bernard Myers: *Tracking the Marvelous: A Life in the New York Art World;* Random House; New York.

Books—paper ones, not those cassettes that are now hanging on racks in bookstores for the busy executives who would like to listen to a paragraph or two while not making deals on their cars' cellular telephones—are mute. The reader must bring his internal ear and silent voice ("Don't move those lips!" we were all enjoined) to bear on the words so that they not only *mean* but resonate. While a talk show appearance or a connection via MCI might prove the case, the implication of the contents of *Tracking the Marvelous* is that John Bernard Myers regularly pronounces the key word with a very soft "a" and a very long "r": "Mar-r-r-r-r-velous." Listen:

> 'Let us note the *hate of the marvelous* which rages in certain men. Let us not mince words: the marvelous is always beautiful, anything marvelous is beautiful, in fact, only the marvelous is beautiful.'

If we didn't know that this passage was from Myers, we might suspect that it was spoken by Lee Liberace or Boy George.

People love "insider gossip." Last May, for example, hardcover best-sellers on the *New York Times* list included Ed ("I Love E.K.") Koch's *Mayor* and Joan ("I'm Not Bad for 50") Collins' *Past Imperfect.* Arty types are not particularly interested, we suppose, in seedy, smoky politics or slimy, steamy bedroom scenes—at least they are not *publicly* interested. They are, however, fascinated by the goings on of artists, and Myers, who arrived on the New York art scene in the early 40's and who was to operate his own gallery, personally knew or knew about all of the big ones: Pollock, de Kooning, Rothko, etc. Myers inadvertently provides the best assessment of his own project: "Someone remarked I had a real talent for ephemera. . . . I accepted that as a compliment." □

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Music

A Family Affair

One of the little-remarked phenomena of modern popular music is the fact that the familial tradition evident in the 1930's, 40's, and 50's, (e.g., the Mills Brothers, the Andrews Sisters, Steve and Edie) continues on. Merciful impulses insist that the Partridge Family and Sonny and Cher are expunged from consideration. The Davies brothers, Ray and Dave, of the Kinks, are of marginal interest; Michael and his brothers Jackson are, of course, not to be avoided. One less familiar association is that of Dale and Terry Bozzio of Missing Persons. Any band that's fronted by what appears to be a 21st-century chanteuse attracts some notice; more importantly, its *Rhyme and Reason* album (Capitol Records) does, too, which is an assessment that cannot be made about too many other recent releases made by family, friends, enemies, or complete strangers.

Not only is Missing Persons proof that the family is not dead musically and that it, surprisingly, still exists in progressive areas in California, the group is very strange in that the charge of lyrical nihilism cannot be leveled against it, or at least not too effectively. For example, on "Give" the message is downright Christian. To wit, the chorus says: "When you have anything at all to give/You have everything to live for/Give all you've got to give/After you've given all you can/Give again-give again." Of course, one can't go too far with the religious association: after all, the album cover photography was shot by Helmut Newton, whose work has more associations with skin, leather, and motel rooms than metaphysics.

Perhaps the most impressive aspect of Missing Persons is the texture of its music, which is at once lush and wide-embracing and yet clean and hard-edged. For the most part, the instrumentation is centered upon electric and electronic devices: electric guitars, electronic drums, synthesizers, etc. While the other guys in his neighborhood were busy pulling the carb on a '57 Chevy, Terry Bozzio and his pals must have been tinkering with instruments, amplifiers, and recording devices; the musicians have an appropriate facility with their devices. A number of the technopop groups that have proliferated lately produce sounds with what must strike them as foreign—perhaps extraterrestrial—objects: the result may be rhythmic, but it's far from human.

King Crimson is not a family band, nor is it new. It is as "new music" (to use the current marketing label), however, as the latest peroxided find. For more than a decade, since the days of *In the Court of the Crimson King,* the group, in one form or another, has been producing what can be neutrally designated as "compositions." While some partisan demisophisticates try to provide justification for their favorite sounds by calling it "art rock," most of the record-buying public argues through economics and bases its opinions on the American Bandstand School of Criticism: If you can't dance to it, forget it. Consequently, King Crimson is pretty much forgotten. Part of the group's problem is its own fault, which it has diagnosed on the title track of *Three of a Perfect Pair* (Warner Brothers/EG Records): "One, one too many/Schizophrenic tendencies/Keeps it complicated/Keeps it aggravated/And full of hopelessness/What a perfect mess." Orderly chaos, of sorts. King Crimson has regularly made scouting raids into the structures of the music of various cultures; this time, by and large, it's the Mideast. Soon, one is looking for the nearest minaret: to climb up on and to jump off of. □

Journalism

Ideology as Prognosis

Village Voice, the chief organ of the radical-industrial complex (a multi-billion-dollar enterprise in left-wing snobbery whose chief products include: mattresses, vociferous anti-Americanism, mink coats, elitist social engineering, rock music, phony populism, instantly disposable footwear, recreational fornication, drugs, trendy political ardors for terrorist "underdogs" such as El Salvador guerrillas, PLO, etc.), assessing Mr. Gary Hart's chances in the Ohio primary:

> As he campaigned across Ohio last week, Gary Hart was committing political suicide.
>
> In a state where recession still is very much in evidence—unemployment in Cleveland stands at 17 percent—Hart steadily attacked the Chrysler bailout and Mondale's support of it.
>
> The bailout of Chrysler has become the symbol of a revived auto industry and a revived economy. Right or wrong, people think it means jobs. It's widely viewed as a victory for the

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UAW, organized labor, and American business.

But Hart argues that Chrysler is wrong—that free enterprise should prevail.

Mr. Hart won in Ohio. □

The Trial

The perception that in Vietnam we fought the right war for the right reasons in the right place and at the right time had begun slowly to suffuse larger and larger segments of our society. It was thus time for the central command of the liberal mind control over America to do something about that wayward and vitiated sort of thinking. Good enough, CBS concocted the by-now-notorious documentary on General Westmoreland and his sins. Gradually, the print-media people—always eager for a bit of schadenfreude at TV's expense, all ideological loyalties notwithstanding—unveiled *how* the Westmoreland caper was brewed, blended, and distilled. Nothing Kafkaesque was involved, actually, just a brutal, callous, primitive character assassination, boots-in-the-dung style, no refined murder technique whatsoever. At the same time, the exposure of CBS's deviousness offers perspectives permitting the nation to see, feel, and know what a moral swamp the liberal communication complex really is. □

THE AMERICAN PROSCENIUM

Representation

Ms. Geraldine Ferraro, a Democratic party hack, a Catholic feminist (what a spiritual and spirited concoction, brewed according to the recipes of the Queens-Long Island bourbon culture!) whom the amalgamated USA womanists (the newest vocable) wished to see as the next vice president, said of late: "The only real threat to women in America is Reagan. . . ."

So, it's no longer violence, rape, male chauvinism, unemployment, sexism at the work place, household exploitation, and cruelly brutal mates. It's Reagan—short and simple. One cannot help but wonder how could a courtly man who takes off his hat when a woman enters an elevator, who stands up when she enters a room, a model husband and father, and a President with the best record of appointing women to the highest civic and political positions in the history of America, be an ultimate threat to women? What Reagan may actually be, however, is not a threat to women but a challenge to feminism, both as ideology and movement. In the deafening din of liberal yellowish journalism, certain notions and differentiations get easily blurred, obscured, or obliterated. The relentless pressure on the Democrats to put a woman and Ms. Ferraro on the ticket came mostly from the National Organization of Women, a political outfit that fraudulently claims to represent American women and womanhood—a bizarre postulate, as there never was any constitutional process put into motion which would determine who represents women and womanhood in America in keeping with correctly established democratic procedures. But such fine details do not bother NOW, its leaders, ideologists, and propagandists. They are feminists; thus, they form a Manichean and totalitarian socioideological construct by definition. Their goal is not representation, spokesmanship, or any semblance of democratic values; their goal is power which will be wielded allegedly in the name of women by and on behalf of women by a self-appointed group of female political operators. This basic premise, grounded in purely totalitarian morality, makes Ms. Ferraro so loose with the plural "American women," though there's not the slightest evidence that she was authorized to do so by anyone else except for her own feminist pals. Which, thank God, are still a paltry minority within this society. □

Hearing Aids Needed

Mr. Reagan has spoken and, all over the land, the liberal conscience, which is located in an average Democrat somewhere between the heart and stomach, exploded with an all-engulfing scream: "Negotiate!" The howl, of course, was dutifully amplified through the entire media structure. What the outraged owners of this type of conscience wanted was to start immediate and nonnegotiable negotiations with Salvadoran terrorists, guerrillas, and leftist thugs, with Nicaraguan henchmen, and with everybody in Havana and Novosibirsk who train, arm, and instigate them.

However, if the liberals were to merely listen to what the guerrillas and the henchmen openly, constantly, and loudly say, repeat, and make known to everyone who *wants* to listen, they would easily discover the bottom-line fact that they, the aggressors, all of whom were breast-fed on Marx, Lenin, and Castro, do *not* want to negotiate. They want power—and they are only willing to accept it on nonnegotiable terms

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either from the liberal appeasers and self-deluding "negotiators" or from the massacred remains of their liquidated opponents—in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and anywhere else they are interested in absolute political control. They do not want to negotiate with a legitimately elected government in El Salvador, with the opposition in Nicaragua, which has been illegitimately deprived of any civil and human rights, nor with anybody, period.

And if the doleful American liberal Democrat were ever inclined to muster a bit of knowledge and the mental agility that's traditionally associated with keeping the Western mind free from suicidal fumes, he/she would reach for the holy scrolls written in blood by Soviet slaughterers and Cuban torturers about the rearing of their minor gangsters in the Central American isthmus, and in these writings discover *why* negotiations between them and us are impossible. We believe that free will, human dignity, political fairness, and justice are the preconditions for a better society. They believe in merciless, deadly, all-encompassing oppression as the only means to make a society better. This chasm between beliefs is proclaimed by our opponents with a booming shout, in the most thunderous and strident promulgations, with a sound so blaring that everyone in the entire world can hear them. Everyone, that is, except the Democrats in Congress, the editorialists in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post,* and the National Council of Churches clergy whose fine consciences are disconnected from the supreme and timeless Christian virtue—the pursuit of truth. □

The Ostrich Chic

As the main reason offered for not honestly and fairly discussing the Rev. Jesse Jackson's real message (as it was propounded during the Democratic primaries), our liberal, fair, honest, and impartial press claims that what he and his proselyte, Mr. Farrakhan, said was "only" black rhetoric, an oratorical ornamentalism devoid of factual meaning. However, what Mr. Farrakhan said, and what is by now common knowledge, was far away from biblical invocations of damnation, burning in hell, the Old Testament kind of transcendental vengeance: he openly promised a very modern sort of *règlement des comptes,* of revenge that is obtained through the barrel of a gun. In a larger sense, he asked for a sort of the Night of Long Knives for anyone who had the temerity to stand in the way to power of a demagogue anointed by the most obscure mandate —that is that of a minority group's fanaticism, which is sustained not by any democratic legitimacy but by a power-thirsty political gang dead set on getting to the top—no matter what the cost. Actually, Mr. Jackson's smug complacency in accepting the backing of such henchmen and "our" media's corrupt liberal insouciance in playing it down are nothing new. Referring to Mr. Farrakhan's rhetoric, the Rev. Jackson told *Time:* "I immediately recognized it as religious metaphor"—and *Time,* that beacon of specious liberal objectivity, though armed with its own formidable checking department, accepted the Rev. Jackson's words at their face value. "Metaphor, schmetaphor . . ." would be the more prudent response from a resident of what the Rev. Jackson calls "Hymietown." Not that long ago, Lenin, Stalin, Mussolini, Hitler, and a score of minor practitioners of that figurativeness of speech were saying the same types of things; the wise liberals in the West smacked their lips, relishing their oratory for the sake of pure literary effect. When Lenin announced his plan to create a new socialist man from the bleached bones of the old humanity, G. B. Shaw, the smartest of all those liberal skeptics, declared that the Soviet murderer was perfectly legitimate in his exquisite eloquence of a people's tribune who knows how to inspire the imagination of the masses; today, we know a bit more about Lenin's fertilizing style, which resulted in slaying millions and millions of Russians in his gulags for the sake of breeding a new humanity. When Hitler promised to eradicate European Jews, the Western liberal press wrote about the inevitable theatrics of his political movement of which bombast is the only substance. "He does not mean it . . ." wrote the organs of liberal conscience in London and New York. He did.

So once again we have someone who speaks publicly in those rasping cadenzas, in that inimitable style of an infuriated ideologue who cleverly erases distinction between spectacle and superstition, for whom perspiration is a vulgar prop of pop-heroism and who at the climax of the boorishness of his pitch genuinely does not know whether he preaches truth or just wallows in his own psychosomatic orgasm instantly merchandised for voyeuristic mass-consumption by "our" media. And what does the liberal press have to say about the phenomenon? "The most gifted orator in American politics"; "Charismatic public speaker"; "Spellbinding presence"; "The master of overheated oratory of black churches and revivalist meetings."

The last characterization is the worst fraud. There's passion, often frenzy, in black churches, but they serve as exhortations to redemption, penitence, deliverance. Words like "racism," "retribution," and "setting the accounts

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straight" are out of place there. It's hard to discover protocommunist ideas shouted in quasi-fascist style in the revivalist chants. But let's not ask the Gold Coast condo residents, or Sutton Place liberals, or all the Dan Rathers of this land to acknowledge the difference. It would be a waste of time. They will endlessly blab about how American politics will never be the same, about the Rev. Jackson's enrichment of the political process—about what he has brought to it, how he made history, what he does for the black pride. Dull columnists in trendy, glossy magazines will revel in their own stupidity, never inquiring whether "charisma" is good or bad for our democratic health, what it means for a pluralistic society, what consequences loom ahead for a civilized republic when a politician demands that his frantic listeners give up their personal humanness and their particular faculty of judgment and follow him blindly as their "Führer" for the right or wrong of *his* choosing. And this is exactly what charisma means in 20th-century politics.

Fortunately, we do not believe the Rev. Jackson *will* make such a big difference, let alone history. He and his campaign will be soon forgotten. Then, the majority of blacks will recognize what their thoughtful leaders like Barbara Jordan on the left, or Thomas Sowell on the right, alluded to all along: that the Rev. Jackson's "rhetoric" has actually set back the cause of black influence on this civilization some half a century. □

A Prudent Progressive

Leopold Tyrmand

All appearances to the contrary, Americans never lived by simple truths. The perennial conflict between the Puritan and rationalist traditions, the two main sources of Americanism from the outset, evicted simplicity from the American Weltanschauung. However, in order to facilitate the endless updating of their social mechanism and mental habits, Americans worked out many ways of living by *simplified* truths, thus acquiring throughout the world a rather doleful image of quintessential simple-mindedness. If the rest of the world persists in its self-deception, then that's its problem. The fact is that the simplified truths, in their essence, are affirmations of a preceding intellectual effort; their streamlined-for-common-use application to our social, cultural, and political realities only corroborate the actual and subcutaneous influence of the sophisticated mind on our daily affairs.

Thus, as far as I can see, the coming Presidential election is going to be fought out neither on pocketbook nor on foreign policy issues, though both of these elements of the historical moment will play a significant role in the voters' decision-making process. To my mind, the overriding quandary that will effect the conscious or less-conscious choice of most Americans is that of the meaning of life. "That's quite an abstract mental torment," many would say, by way of discounting my proposition. Yet I maintain that what oppresses the individual and collective minds of the constituency between ages 20 and 40—the single most dynamic voting bloc and one central to anybody's victory—is the very sense of existence, which was ravaged by the apocalypse of irrationality and moral incoherence of the 1960's and 1970's. It is a frustrated generation, one that has tried every offering of the most garish cultural bazaar in recent history, and which now wishes to know something more about things like marriage and patriotism, and to strip some hoary notions to their marrow and rediscover what they can do in order to improve their generation's appreciation of its own being. It is an attentive audience, not easily impressed by artful sociopolitical shrillness, but anyone who would come to them with a New Word about the necessity of refurbished prudence on the international scene, or about the hidden charms of sexual jealousy (which have been so callously destroyed by permissiveness and feminism) may find some unexpected riches of support that can be translated into political power of quite novel dimension and significance. If only President Reagan would discover how to do it, this country could enter a new phase of material, spiritual, and social prosperity that would dwarf everything we have known before. □

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